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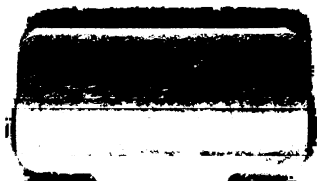
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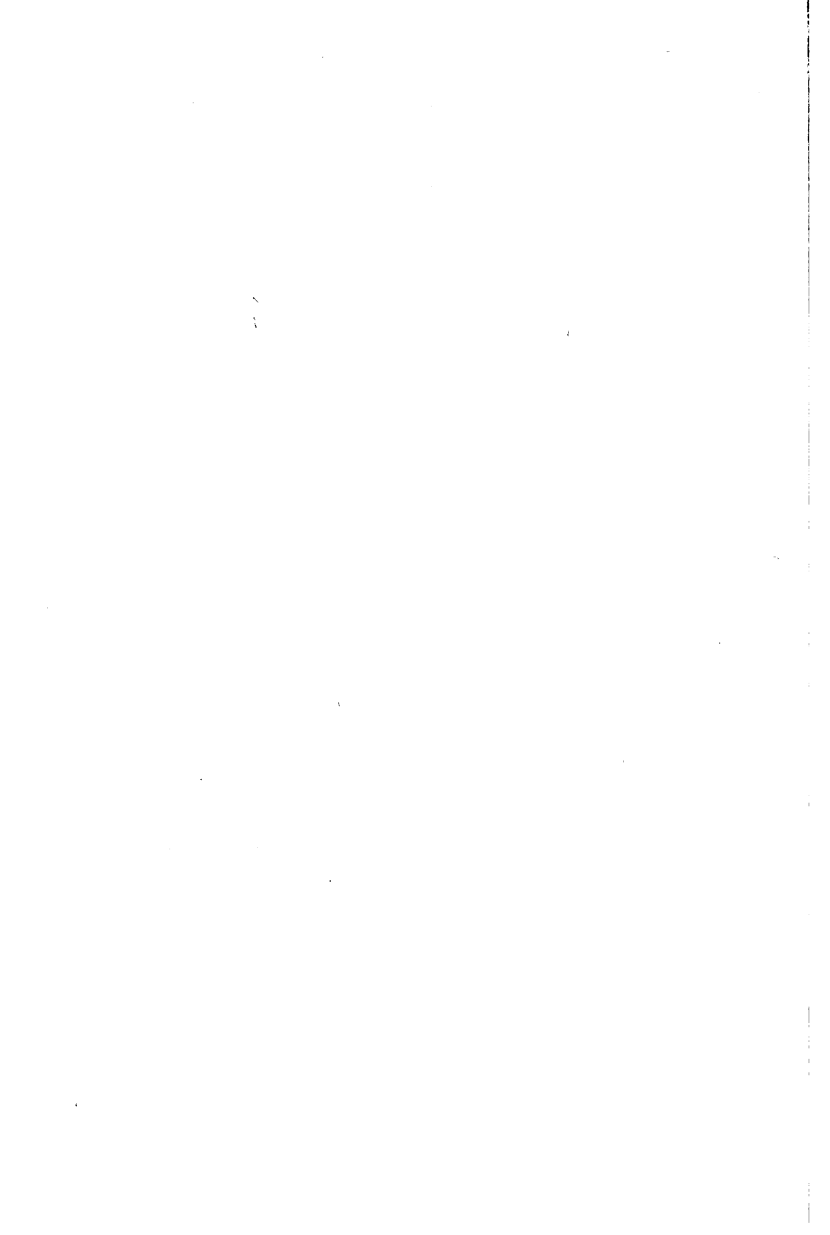
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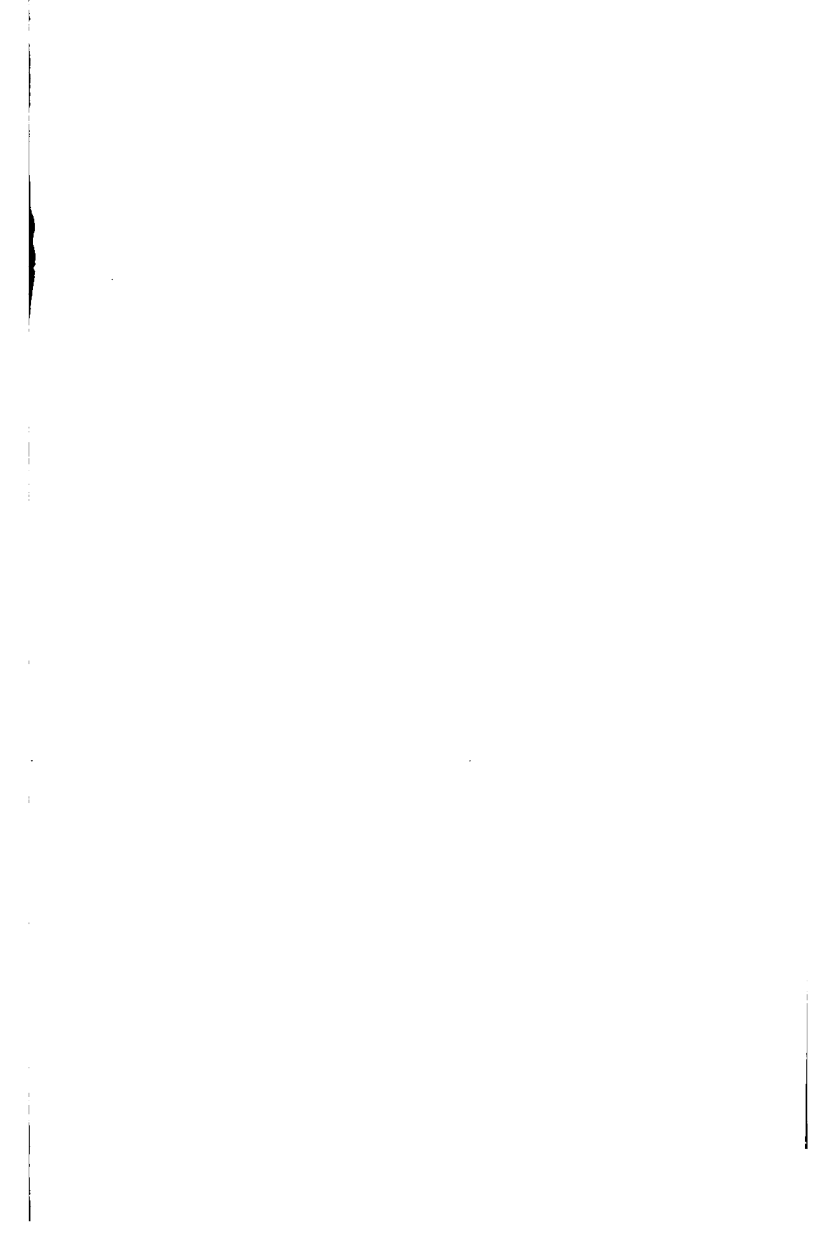
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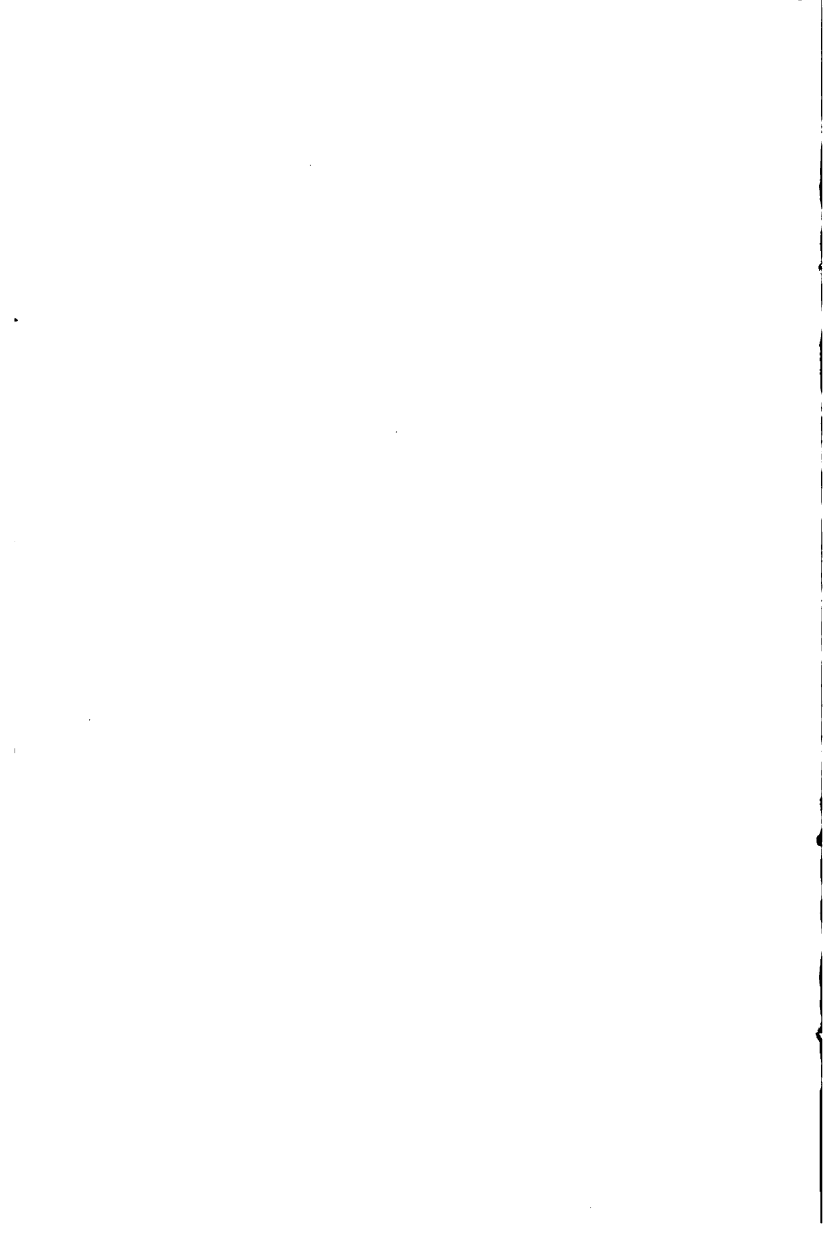


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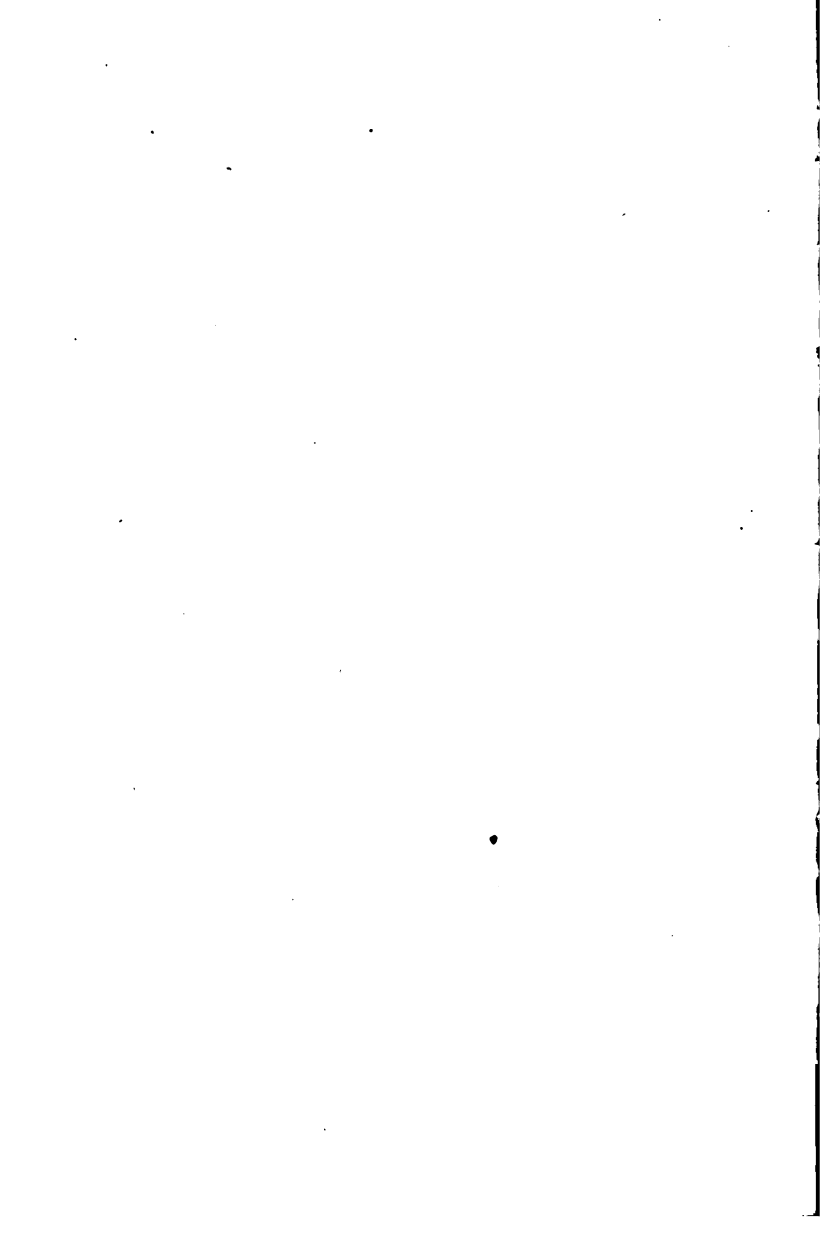






THE QUEST OF THE SANCGREALL,

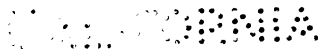
THE SWORD OF KINGSHIP, &c.



THE
QUEST OF THE SANCGREALL,
THE SWORD OF KINGSHIP,
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY
T. WESTWOOD,
AUTHOR OF "THE BURDEN OF THE BELL,"
"THE CHRONICLE OF THE COMPLEAT ANGLER," ETC.

"A story cronyclod for one of the truest and holiest that is in thys world."
—CAXTON'S *Colophon to the History of the Sancgreall.*



LONDON:
JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, 36 SOHO SQUARE.
1868.

English Alumnus

Edinburgh: Printed by Ballantyne & Company.

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J

To

Emilia Deby,

these

Legends of the Sangreall

are Dedicated,

with every sentiment of esteem and attachment,

by

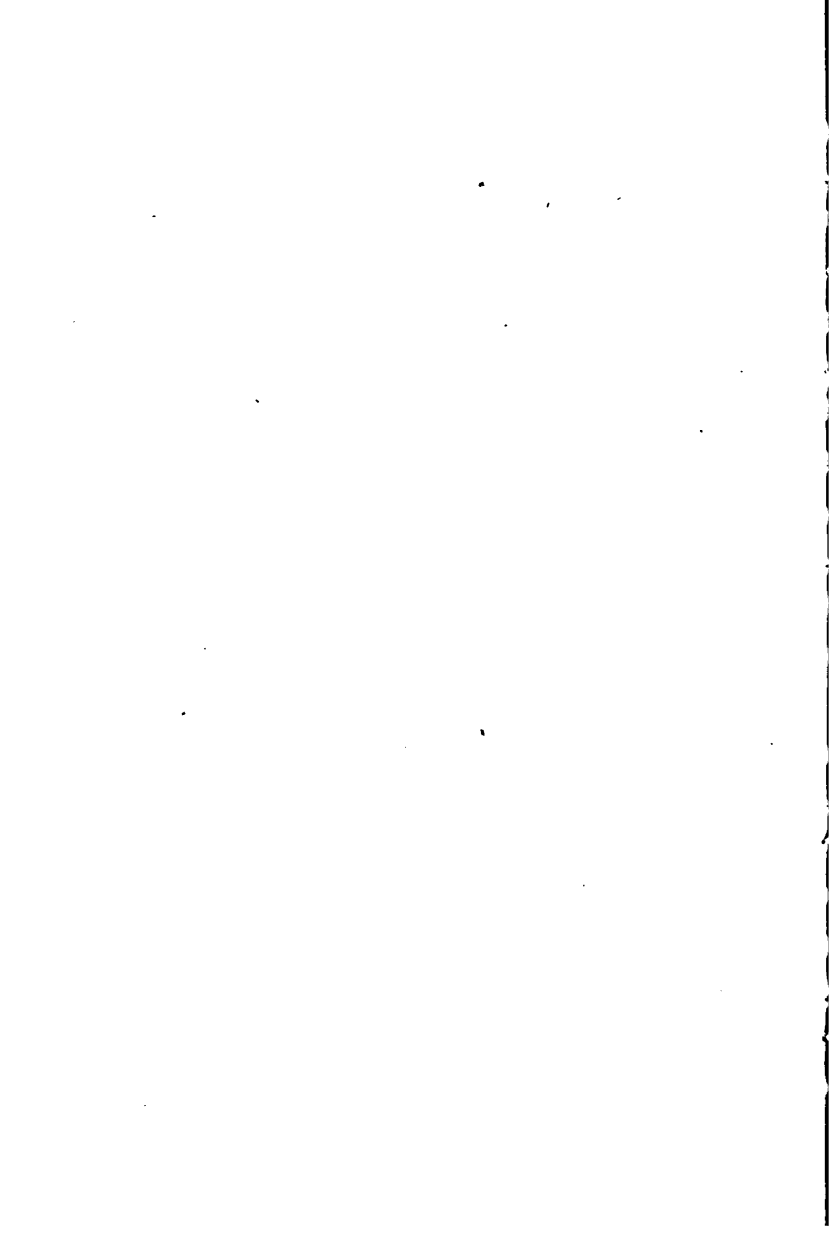
her Son-in-Law,

THE AUTHOR.

“Our tokens of love are, for the most part, barbarous. Cold and lifeless, because they do not represent our life. The only gift is a portion of thyself. Therefore, let the farmer give his corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; and the poet, his poem.”

—EMERSON.

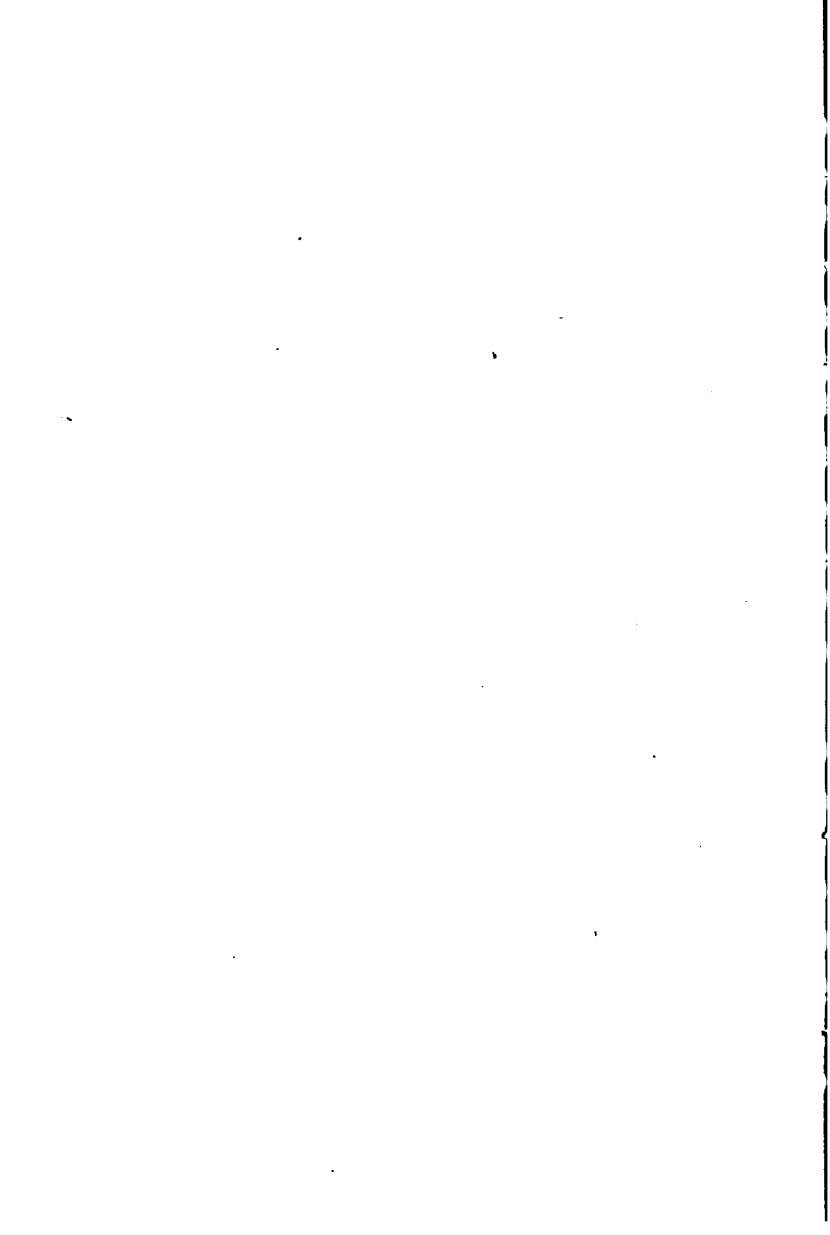
b



THE following Legends, with the exception of the "Sword of Kingship," in no wise pretend to a close rendering of the Arthurian romance, to which I have only adhered intermittently, and when it suited my purpose.

The concluding Sonnets have already been printed on the Continent.

T. W.



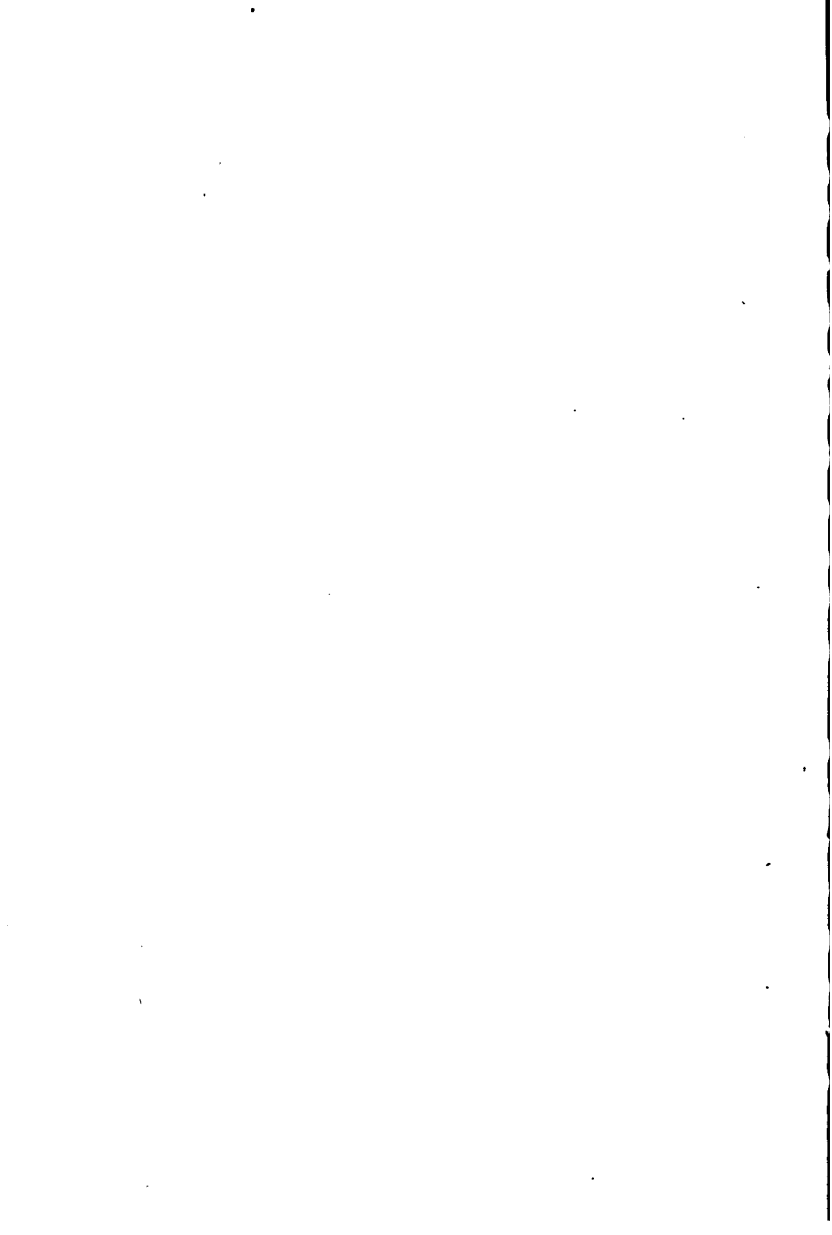
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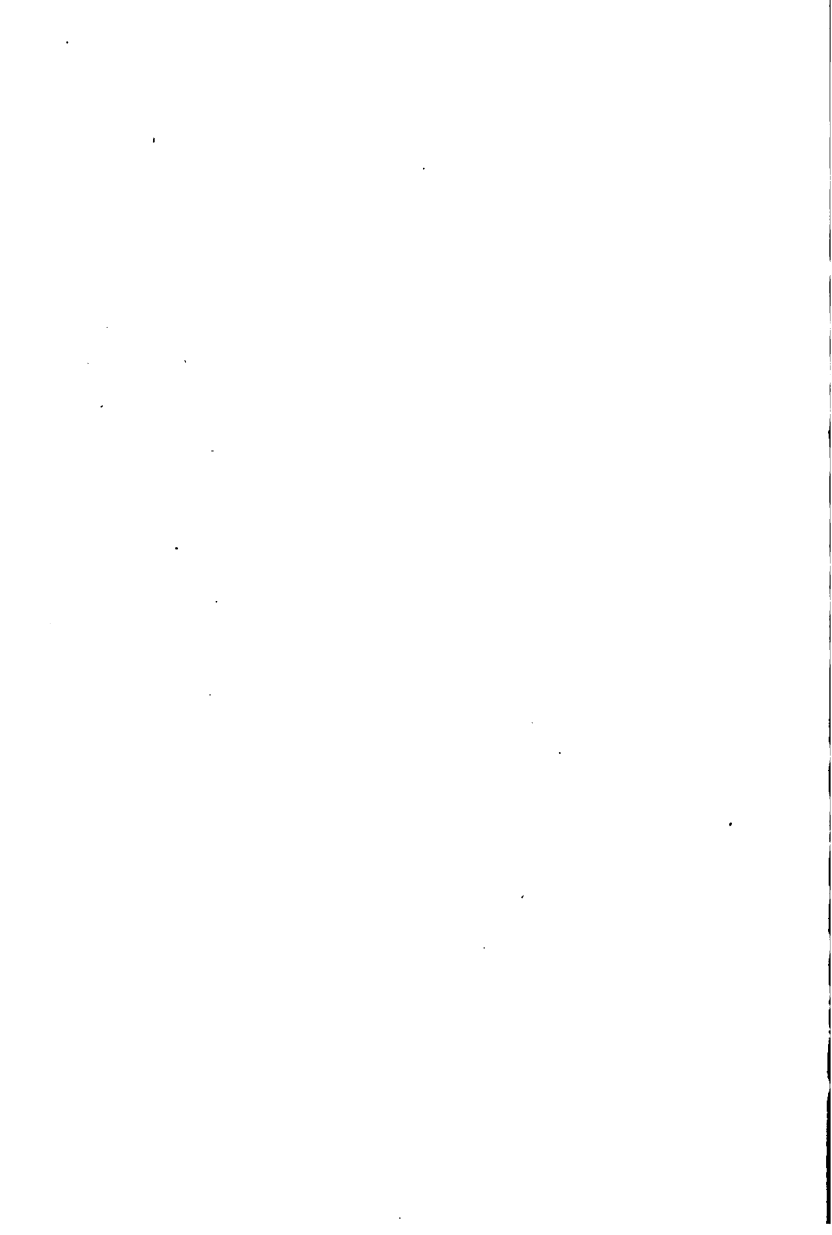
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THE
QUEST OF THE SANCGREALL.



O Rood of God! Dear God, transpierced on Rood!
O bitter cry of "Eloi! Eloi!" sent
In agony, through all the wandering worlds!
While fiends in nether hell kept jubilee,
And seraphs, up in heaven, shed tears that left
A nebulous splendour in the skies for aye.
O Rood of God! O Blood of God! that dropped
Into the cup, by faithful hands upheld,
The sacred Sancgreall, borne, for many an age,
Through Christendom, a blessing to the lands,
Till lost in Britain, in the night of time!



THE
QUEST OF THE SANGREALL.



I.

THE VOW.

IN the siege perilous * sat Sir Galahad;—
Sir Galahad, the flower of knights, the pure;—
Sir Galahad, that kneeling at the cross,
In Carlisle Minster, on All-hallow-eve,

* “When Merlin had ordained the Round Table, he said, ‘By them that should be fellowes of the Round Table, the truth of the Sanggreall shall be known.’ And men asked him how men might know them that should best do the achievement of the Sanggreall. Then said he, ‘There should be three white bulls that should achieve it, . . . and that one of the three should passe his father as much as the lyon passeth his libberd, both of strength and hardinesse.’ They which heard Merlin say so, said then unto Merlin, ‘Sithence there shall be such a knight

Was caught up, in the spirit, or the flesh,
And heard the "Holy, Holy, Holy!" sung,
By angel and archangel round the throne ;
And, poised upon the topmost golden stair,
Felt as 'twere fannings of the eternal palms,
And drank the odour of the blooms of heaven.

In the siege perilous sat Sir Galahad ;—
A dreamy splendour hovered in his eyes,
As though far down the vista of the years,
Beyond the cloud of conflict, shock of fate,
He saw the issue and the end of all.

In that great conclave, solemn was the talk
And sorrowful—of wrong triumphant, power

thou shouldest ordaine by thy craft a siege that no man should sit therein, but he only which shall passe all other knights.' And then Merlin answered that he would do so ; and then he made the siege perilous in which Sir Galahad sat upon Whitsunday last past."—*La Mort d'Arthure*, Part iii. Chap. 50. Edit. 1634.

Unsanctified, and loss irreparable.

“Thrice sacred Sanggreall!” Arthur said, and drooped
His forehead in his palms—“would God, once more
We might behold thee, though but for a sign
Of benediction, and a hope new-born
To cheer the darkness of these evil days!”
'Twas twilight, but no sooner had the king
Ceased speaking, than athwart the gathering gloom,—
O miracle! a sudden glory broke,
And flushed each upturned and transfigured face,
With rosy radiance. And the knights were 'ware
That, circled with a halo, in their midst,
The Sanggreall floated, draped and muffled up
In samite white as snow;—one moment seen,
No more—then fell the black and bitter night,
And the keen east wind whistled o'er the wold.

The bitter night! a night of June! a night
Of joy celestial! fragrance on the air
Of mead flowers, honey-sweet; birds on each bough,

Merle, mavis, nightingale, a maze of song ;
Stars, in the lucid ether, big as moons,
And missioned angels, between earth and heaven,
Ascending and descending, to the chime
Of harps and crystal voices interfused !

So seemed it to the knights, as each one sat
Silent, by beatific dreams possessed ;
So seemed it to Sir Galahad—in his eyes
The mystic splendour burned with deeper flame.
Long pondered he ;—at length, with resonant voice,
He spake : “ My Lord, King Arthur, and you, knights
Peerless, my brothers of the Table Round,
Bear witness !—Foremost wrong to be redressed,
I seek the sacred Sanggreall through the world.
Never, by Mary mother and the saints,
Will I forego this quest,—ne'er tread these courts
Again, till cleansed from sin, mine eyes have seen
The holy cup unveiled, and o'er my lips
Hath passed the savour of the Blood of God !

Who joins me in my vow?"—Uprose they all,
By one high impulse moved ; assenting shouts,
Eager, impetuous, passed from lip to lip,
Throughout the circuit of the Table Round.
"Ours be thy vow ! By Mary mother, too,
We 'll seek the sovran Sanggreall through the world !"

But Arthur pensive sat—forbid, by ties
Of kingship, to espouse that pious quest,
And whelmed with grief, that, through the knightly
pact,
Widowed of all its chivalry, his throne
Would stand a mark for traitors, or be left
To hirelings for defence. Nor he, alone,
Grieved inly ; from a lattice in the wall,
A white face, dabbled o'er with tears, looked down—
Queen Guenevere's—and fixed Sir Lancelot,
And pierced him with a glance of keen reproach.

Thus, moody and perplexed, the king broke up

The council, and the knights dispersed to make
Confession, and seek shrift, and so to rest ;
But through the night, in vision, they beheld
The Sanggreall floating in its rosy cloud,
Ringed round with sworded angels, a white host
Innumerable, that flocked downward, by a stair
Of pearl and opal, from the gate of heaven.

But there were eyes that closed not, eyes that saw
The wan moon struggle with the storm, the stars
Wane in their courses. In each silken bower,
By queen (ah ! evil heart !) and courtly dame,
And damsel, in her seventeen summers' sheen,
Soft spells were woven, and subtle cantrips planned,
To snare men's souls. O white caressing arms !
O golden tresses, showered on breasts of snow !
O voices like the ring-dove's !—these the lures
To loose each recreant bond-slave from his vow,
Despite the saints. . . . Vain hope ! for long ere
dawn,

Prescient of tender trouble on the air,
The knightly troop stole forth, and two by two
Defiling, pricked across the upland plain,
And clomb the ridge, and vanished in the mist.

From the far foldings of the hills, anon
A wailing peal of many trumpets bore
Their farewell to the heart of Camelot.

Ho ! for the Sancgreall, blessed Blood of God !

THE snowdrop pierced the snow ; with belts of fire,
The crocus lit the borders : Spring o'erran
The earth, fleet-footed, till the whitethorn bush
Broke into milky blossom of the May.
Queen Guenevere, with absent eyes, and cheeks
Love-pallid, paced her pleasance to and fro,
And twisted posies of red gilly-flowers,
Pansies and purple-globed anemones,
Then tossed them from her in a storm of sighs.

One morn, when summer verged on its decline,
A straggling cavalcade of pilgrims passed,
Foot-sore, beneath the walls of Camelot ;
A woeful crew ! riddled by wind and storm,
Mere rags and relics of humanity,
A vision of dry bones. These, one and all,
She questioned, and with cracked and blistered lips,

They babbled of strange lands and savage men,
Of shrines in the deep Orient, home of God—
Of dungeons and disasters, racks and chains—
But of Sir Lancelot tidings had they none.
So with cold thanks she sped them on their way,
And laughed a vacant laugh to see them flit,
A string of scarecrows, through the yellowing corn.

Then swarthy reapers thronged the harvest fields,—
The sickle glittered in the sun ; the shocks
Stood berry-brown ; and to each homestead
came,—

Because a sense of plenty filled the air,—
Barefooted monks, with pouches open-mouthed,
Alms-begging for the needs of Mother Church ;
A sheaf of lilies for St Cunegunde,
Or annual levying of St Peter's pence.
Such, from her lattice leaning, Guenevere
Would beckon, and, into greedy hands upheld,
Drop royal dole, and to their garrulous talk,

With hungry ears give heed ;—a whining tale
Of hardships dire, and sharp monastic rule ;
Short commons, ceaseless trappings to and fro,
Penance by day, and Sathanas and his imps
Harrying their souls in purgatorial dreams.
Yea . . . many cities had they seen, and men,
But nought observed . . . it was a weary world !
(Glib down their gullets gurgled the red wine—)
Knights, maybe, by the score—a roystering rout !—
But of Sir Lancelot tidings had they none . . .
'Twixt *Salve !* and *Pax vobiscum !* nought but this.

So evermore the months drew to a close ;
The apple ripened to its ruddy prime ;
The pear dropped, golden, in the orchard grass ;
Athwart the gusty sky long flights of storks,
With whirl of wing and noisy clap of beak,
Passed southward . . . still no tidings, and the
queen,
At midnight, kneeling in her oratory,

A *mea culpa!* quivering on her lip,
A MEA MAXIMA CULPA! heard the bells
Roll forth their brazen clangour o'er the world,
Ring out the old year, welcome in the New.

FOUR times the year revolved, ere, one by one,
King Arthur's errant knights to Camelot
Returned . . . in hapless plight. Spectral their
steeds,

As Death's in the Apocalypse—their helms
Cloven—defaced the blason of their shields ;
Into the palace, through byeways, they slunk
And hid themselves, a leprosy in their blood
Of loathing, and a deep disgust of life.
Grievous their tale of unaccomplished quest ;
Of warfare with invincible powerse—arth, heaven,
Banded against them, and the fiends of hell
In ambush at each step ; demoniac dreams,
Witcheries without a name, and worse than all,
A glamour of the senses, vehement
And irresistible, that drew them on,—
As the great loadstone mountain draws the bark,—

To isles of syrens on the summer seas.
There, damning joys—the wine-cup at the lip,
The limbs slow moving in the Bacchic dance,
And “Evöe ! Evöe !” on the silver airs. . .
Oh ! knightly honour tarnished ! horror ! shame !
So vengeful is high Heaven of holy task
Approached with hands impure and sinful will !

At Pentecost, complete the tale of knights,
Save four, the head and empyry of them all,
Sir Percevall, Sir Galahad and his sire,
Sir Lancelot of the Lake, and rough Sir Bors.
Of these no trace, or tidings, save a breath
Of rumour, coming no man knew from whence ;
Fantastic tales of barks, beneath the moon,
Beheld on mountain tarns, mailed shapes aboard,
And a weird woman, with a steadfast face,
Steering 'gainst wind and wave ;—of giants slain,
And cruel customs of primeval date
Abolished ;—dungeons ransacked, captives freed ;

And one, an aged anchorite of the hills,
Had seen, 'twas whispered, in his midnight watch,
A stately knight climb the precipitous pass,
That leads to steep Tintàgel and the sea.
Snow-white his steed, snow-white his armour all,
From helm to heel ;—his visage pale, but pure
As holy angel's—all the orbs of heaven
Broke into twofold splendour as he came.
He scaled the steep—the curtain of the mist
Shimmered like silver, as he entered in,
And from the perilous summits, pealed a cry
Reverberate,—echoed back by cliff and scaur—
“HO ! FOR THE SANCGREALL, BLESSED BLOOD OF
GOD !”

II.

THE LEGEND OF KING EVELAKE.

A LEGEND of King Evelake, Paynim Lord
Of Sarras, in the spiritual place,*
And why Sir Galahad rode without his shield.

Joseph of Arimathea,—that just man,
Whose eyes beheld the Passion of our Lord,
Who laid His body in his own new tomb,—
Dwelt at Jerusalem, within the walls.

* Or Holy Land. Sarras is frequently designated as above in the legend of the "Mort d'Arthur." "Maundeville," says Mr Wright, (the last editor of the old romance,) "gives the name Sarras to one of the great cities of Media, but I have thought it not impossible that it may be a corruption of Charræ, the Haran of Scripture."

With almsgiving and pious deeds and prayer,
He followed humbly in his Master's steps,
And waited for His kingdom that should come.
But when the Roman thraldom crushed the land,
And dungeons gaped, and evermore the scourge
Fell heavy, Joseph girded up his loins,
And fled to the hill-country, till he came
To Sarras, a great city on a rock,
That glittered like a diamond all a-blaze,
And glowed with purple of the setting sun.

But round the gates, behold a rebel host ;
Tents pitched,—long lines and squares of serried
spears,
And Evelake and his captains on the wall,
With ordered arms and implements of war,
And soothsayers and priests in grave debate.
A vision came to Joseph as he gazed,
A dream vouchsafed of God, and he was told
Of all things, what to do, and what to say.

Unchallenged through the rebel ranks he passed,
And the grim warder, at the city gate,
Opened and let him in. King Evelake turned,
Sudden, and saw a stranger at his side,
Meek-faced, but this dread message on his lips :—
“ Michael, archangel of the most high God,
Vicegerent of His judgments amongst men,
To Evelake, Paynim Lord of Sarras, saith :—
Because thy sins are grievous, and the blood
Of just men crieth against thee from the ground,
The books are opened and the sentence writ.
It is decreed, O king, that thou, and all
Thy counsellors and mighty men of war,
Shall be cut off and perish utterly,
As Agag was cut off, and Amalek,
Og, and the proud hosts of Sennacherib,
If ere to-morrow’s dawn, thou hast not spurned
Mahound, and laid thine heart at Jesu’s feet.”

Then the king’s countenance changed, and he withdrew

Into his sacred chamber, and that night
With Joseph held discourse ; and Joseph prayed,
And zealously expounded all the law,
And prophets, and with vehement sweat of brow,
And travail of the spirit, and tears of blood,
Wrestled with hell for the poor sinner's soul ;
Till, one by one, the motes of error passed
From Evelake's eyes, and all the crusts of sin
Dropped off and left him like a man new-born ;
And ere the first gold arrow of the day
Shot upward, with a contrite cry he fell
Prone, and his forehead in the dust, abjured
Mahound, and laid his heart at Jesu's feet.
And Joseph raised him up, and they two knelt
Together, and gave thanks to Christ the Lord.

Then Joseph took a buckler from the wall,
Of triple hide, with Maccabean brass
O'erlapped, and traced upon its open field
A mystic sign—and gave it to the king.

“ And when the armies of Mahound,” quoth he,
“ Press round with their spears and bear thee down,
Hold high this sacred shield before them all,
And God, that fought for Israel, and ground
Its foes to dust, shall smite them hip and thigh.”

So Evelake, with his mighty men of war,
His spearmen and his footmen in array,
Swept through the city gates—and lo ! the sun
Hung crimson in the skies, and all the land
Lay reeking-red, as bathed in seas of blood.
With blare of trumpets, and a stormy clash
Of cymbals, the two hosts, in headlong charge,
Met, and the rebel cohorts broke the van
Of Evelake’s guards, and with tumultuous press
Beset the king, and strove to bear him down.
But he, in rush of onset, having won
A clear space round him with his whirling blade,
Raised high his shield, and steady faced the foe.
God of Sabaoth ! down dropped spear and glaive ;

The ringing war-cries died into a wail
Of horror, for each soldier of Mahound
Saw on the blazing disk a bloody cross,
And nailed upon the cross, a man, a GOD,
With blasting eyes, that scathed them like a flame,
Withered their eye-balls, filled their hearts with fear ;
And some dropped dead, as smit by levin bolt,
And some, bereft of reason, raved and wept ;
The rest, with groans for mercy, in the dust
Grovelled—till Evelake's heart was touched with ruth,
And hiding 'neath his scarf the sacred shield,
He passed from rank to rank, and bade the host
Disperse, and seek their homes, and sin no more.
And they, submissive, went, and from the plain
Melted that mighty armament, as melts
The splendour and the havock of ā dream.

As Evelake back to Sarras city rode,
A sound of hallelujahs filled the air,
Symphonious, by invisible angels sung ;

And a white dove, descending from a cloud,
With sunny wings flew round him all the way.
Before the palace Joseph met the king,
Gave benediction and the kiss of peace,
And, joyful, they praised God for His good work.
But ere the feast was spread, the wine was poured,
In state, from street to street, the monarch passed,
Struck down the images of false Mahound,
And shut, with his own hands, the temple doors.

And all night long, above the sleeping town,
The white dove hovered, in a silver haze,
Nor ceased the hallelujahs until dawn.

IN Christian Sarras, Joseph tarried long ;
Tilled the good soil, nurtured the fruitful seed,
And garnered noble harvests for the Lord.
But when his task grew light—no waste uncleared,
No field but nodded with the golden grain,
He paused, and by supernal promptings urged,
To preach the faith in lands beyond the sea,
To all his faithful folk he bade farewell,
Blessed them in God and Christ, and went his way.
And Evelake, out of love and pious zeal,
Went with him, and his son reigned in his stead.
No worldly pelf they took, save pilgrim staff
And scrip, nor weapon, save the sacred shield.
Six days and nights through sandy tracts they toiled,
But on the seventh, the Sabbath of the Lord,
Resting, they felt the breath of the salt breeze,
And heard the hollow murmur of the main.

* * * * *

IN Lyonesse, amongst the pleasant woods
Of Britain, in the Abbey of St John,
Lay Joseph, full of years and of good works,
Waiting the final summons of his Lord.
Beside him, with crossed palms, King Evelake
 knelt,
Himself white-haired,—received his last behests,
And fixed on his wan face regretful eyes ;
For strong their bond of brotherhood in Christ—
Much had they undergone and overcome
Together—much, glory to Him ! achieved ;—
And now the inevitable hour drew nigh
Of severance—unto one, the rest, the palm,
The “ Enter, good and faithful servant ! thine
The glory and the gladness of thy Lord ! ”
And to the other, the world’s weary ways,
Made wearier by an unaccustomed cross.

While Joseph lay, white-visaged, on his bed,
He saw the summer night break out in stars,
Myriads on myriads, as if God were there,
With all the hosts and hierarchies of heaven ;
And through the open lattice floated in
The Sangcreall, haloed in its rosy cloud,
And Joseph's thirst was quenched, and he was fed ;
And all his pain went from him, and he sung
The *Nunc Dimittis* loud, as one that lies
Upon the threshold of a happy place,
Full fain the door should ope and let him in.
But last, he bade his friend convey the shield
To Nacien, abbot of that holy house,
To be stored up in trust, till one should come,
Tenth in descent of kinship, Galahad,
A faithful knight and pure, ordained to win
Much worship, and achieve a sacred quest.—
His should the shield be, and no other man's.

Then Joseph kissed King Evelake on the cheek,

And turned him to the wall and fell asleep,
And was not, for God took him.—Blessed be God!

This legend to Sir Galahad Merlin told,
And through the broomy knowes, blithe as a bird,
He rode to try the adventure of the shield.

III.

THE LEGEND OF THE SHIELD.

Exurgat Deus ! Be the lawless hands
, Palsied, that touch the ark, unwashed of sin !

Two knights rode down the glades of Lyonesse—
It was midsummer and the leafy prime—
Sir Galahad, one, blue-eyed, with lips that smiled,
As in a dream of bliss, unwittingly ;
And one, Sir Galheron of Table Round,
A son of Anak, huge, colossus-limbed,
A slayer of the Philistines, a king
Of roysterers and ribalds, without ruth,
Or any grace of chivalry, though not
Unloved by creatures of the soulless sort.

To this swart champion fame had brought the tale
Of Joseph's shield, its perils and its spells ;
And bent on proving wizards' cantrips vain,
In war with thews and sinews, he besought
Sir Galahad, with a blustering courtesy,
Three days and nights to let him wear the
shield,

In ordeal, for his worship and renown.
And Galahad, with a voice that seemed to sink
Earthward, from heights of interstellar air,
Assented ; so by woodland paths they rode
Together, while the thickets thrilled with song.
Above Sir Galahad, from bough to bough,
Flitted the nightingale, and piped and trilled
The wren lit on his shoulder, carolling
As in its nest ; the rabbit and her young
Sported beside him, and the squirrel ran
Before his courser's hoofs, and leaped and frisked :
But o'er Sir Galheron flapped the raven's wing,
Its croak and caw the only song he heard.

'Twas idlesse in the abbey of St John ;
From chapel, crypt, and cell the brothers flocked ;
Like starlings in a reed-bed, loud their clack,
Loquacious ; court and cloister were astir,
Hall and refectory humming like a hive.
But one, the monk Anselmus, of them all
The oldest, grayest, sternest, stood apart,
And beat his breast, and muttered with grim lips,
“ I hear the raven's croak, the tramp of doom ! ”
Wide open swung the lattice in the wind,
And down the woodland lawns Anselmus saw
Sir Galahad and Sir Galheron ride abreast,
Into the abbey meads, and in their rear,
A Shadow on the shadow of a steed.

Before the abbey gate, the knights drew rein,
And to the thronging brotherhood, made known
Their errand—and Anselmus, with the look
Of one, that, sudden, meets death face to face,
And through his marrow feels a mortal chill,

Brought forth the shield. A weird and antique arm !
As Galahad, with wonder, eyed its dints
And bosses, falling in a trance, he heard
The thunders of old battles roll o'erhead,—
Thunders of Maccabean fights—the roar
Of Judah's lion leaping on his prey.
The Orient spread its solemn wastes abroad,
Before him, as in vision ; he beheld
Hot plains, that shimmered under skies of brass—
The havock of great hosts, the charge, the flight,
Crowns reft, and kingly raiment red with blood.

Meanwhile, Sir Galheron, to his saddle-bow
Stooping, impatient, held out eager hands :
To whom Anselmus stern—" Sir Knight, forbear !
Fatal this arm to all unshrived of sin—
Fatal to youth, fool-hardy, ill-advised,
In whose hot blood the harlotry of life
Runs riot, by no pious vow subdued,
The best and purest knight in all the world

Shall wear the shield, no other—'tis decreed.”
Like bull of Basan roared Sir Galheron—
“Nor best, nor worst am I, but by my troth,
Three days and nights I'll wear it, though the fiend
Spring up to say me nay!”—He snatched the shield,
He spurred his steed, and down the rocky road
Rushed headlong, hid in hurricanes of dust.
Whereat Sir Galahad, waking from his trance,
Was 'ware of things familiar,—saw once more
The abbey and its gables all a-glow,—
The oaks of Lyonesse in their leafy prime.

The level sunbeams carpeted the sward,
With golden tissue ; in a burning haze,
The western hills glowed, molten and intense,
As copper at a seven-fold furnace heat,
And in the east hung wan the gibbous moon.
By twos and threes along the slopes, the monks,
Dispersing, fell to question and debate ;
Some wagering for Sir Galheron's strength of arm—

These were the sturdy younglings of the flock—
And some for Joseph, and his magic, made
Potent, by seal and sanction of the Church.
Sir Galahad, like a statue on his steed,
Sat by the abbey gate, intent, as one
That looks for fateful issue near at hand.

* * * * *

SIR GALHERON pricked along the lanes, and sung
A song of merrimake and mad carouse ;—
Beneath an oak, he saw an eerie maid,
That smiling sat and tressed her yellow hair,
And bade him tarry, for the night was nigh.
“ Oh ! tarry, tarry !—they that say me nay,
Come back no more, Sir Knight, come back no more ! ”
And the wind whispered to the woods “ no more ! ”
And Echo took it up, “ no more, no more ! ”
Through all her fluted caves and hollow hills.
Sir Galheron winked his eye and twitched his beard,
And thrice looked back—the eerie maid was fair—
Then drowned her pleading with his song, and passed.

He left the lanes—through woodland dells he rode—
Amongst the ferns he met a fairy queen,
A fairy queen, with crown of gold—a queen,

That to a dulcimer sang, sweet and low,
A lay of Faëry ; as with chains of silk,
It bound the knight and would not let him go.
It told of pain and peril in the world ;
It told of love and rest in greenwood shade—
Of love and joy and feast and fairy wine.
“ Oh ! tarry, tarry ! ” like a bird she sung—
“ Oh ! tarry, tarry !—they that say me nay,
Come back no more, Sir Knight, come back no
more ! ”

And the wind murmured down the glens “ no more ! ”
And Echo took it up, “ no more, no more ! ”
Through all her fluted caves and hollow hills.
Sir Galheron struggled with his failing sense—
A subtle torpor weighed his eyelids down ;—
He shook it off—he broke the elfin spell—
He drowned her pleading with a mocking laugh,
A cruel laugh, and spurred his steed, and passed.

He left the wood—he struck across the plain,

A stormy gloom encompassed him about ;
A horror of great darkness filled his soul.
He saw the phantom of a loathly knight,
That rode towards him, without tramp of steed ;
A giant knight, black-armoured and black-plumed,
Portentous, looming through a lurid mist.
Fear seized him—palsied grew his mighty arm,
His heart turned ice—they met in full career ;
Sir Galheron's lance was splintered by the shock,
As a reed splinters 'gainst a granite crag ;
The black knight smote Sir Galheron on the helm
A mortal stroke, that crushed through mail and brain,
And dashed the son of Anak in the dust.
Then broke the storm ; a nether darkness fell
On all things, and a mighty rushing wind
Drove its fierce pinion through the woods and wailed.

Sir Galahad heard strange voices on the blast,
That sung a ditty, all of death and dole :—
“ He comes no more ! ah ! never, never more !

We bade him tarry, but he rode away—

He spurned our love, he mocked our spells and
passed—

He comes no more ! ah ! never, never more !”

And from each nook and folding of the wood,

And from the cloisters, like a tolling bell,

Echoed that dreary wail, “No more, no more !”

The storm grew fainter with its finished work,

And through the rack the drifting moonlight showed

A phantom knight, black-armoured and black-plumed,

That towards Sir Galahad, with no tramp of steed,

Rode stately, and Sir Galahad saw him come.

He crossed himself—nor lance, nor glaive he grasped ;

He stilled his shaking pulses with a prayer.

The phantom lowered before him, like a mist

That holds the ice-wind in its livid folds ;

June withered to December in its shade ;

It stooped its crest ; it stretched out shadowy arms ;

It hung round Galahad's neck the sacred shield

And vanished. Lo! the shield was white as snow,
Save where a bloody cross glared in the midst,
Fresh, as just shaped from blessèd martyr's veins.

Then Galahad saw that solemn sight of old,
Vouchsafed to Joseph in his dying hour ;
He saw the summer night break out in stars,
Myriads on myriads, as if God were there,
With all the hosts and hierarchies of heaven.
Celestial odours floated on the air,
Celestial savours cheered his fainting sense ;
He ate of angels' food and he was filled.
And in the silence, with the falling' dew,
Came down a voice that said, "Fair Knight of Christ !
The end is nigh—be faithful to the end !"

All night, before the altar, Galahad knelt
In vigil, but at sunrise rode away.

So ends the adventure of the enchanted shield.

IV.

THE LEGEND OF THE SYREN ISLES.

“Woe for Sir Lancelot!” the Kelpy sung,
The sleek-haired Kelpy, lurking in the reeds :—
“Woe for Sir Lancelot! his cheek is wan!—
His cheek is wan—his eyes are sad and wild—
A cruel fiend hath caught him in her thrall—
Woe for Sir Lancelot!” the Kelpy sung.
And the Nix, peering through the bulrush beds,
The stealthy Nix, with ivory forehead fair,
Crooned drearily—“Ah me! Sir Galahad!
A cloud is on his brow—his heart is changed—
A cruel fiend hath bound him in her thrall—
Ah me! the noble knight!” . . . And down the
stream,
The shallop floated, to a sleepy tune

Of lapping water and of souging wind,
Sir Lancelot and Sir Galahad lost in dreams,
And at the stern, half-seen beneath the moon,
A woman crouching, weird, with steadfast face,
And eyes inscrutable as stars of heaven.
From under beechen boughs they drifted on
Into the marshland and the deathly fog,
That swathed them, as a cerement swathes the corpse.
They heard the muffled clang of convent bells,
From valleys inland, and the dying drone
Of voices,—*in aeternum Domine!*
But prone they lay—nor crossed themselves, nor said
So much as Ave Mary! or Amen!
Motionless sat the shadow at the helm—
And steered them on, through fen and fallow tracts,
Pasture and plain and limitless expanse
Of windy waste, till, widening to the main,
The river ran in shallows, or was caught
In weedy pools, and swerving from its course,
The shallop shuddered with a grating keel.

Then seemed it to Sir Galahad, in his dream,
A woman's cry crept curdling o'er the wave,
Wild, inarticulate—crept o'er pool and bay,
And winding creek, and gully of the shore ;
Sobbed 'mid the sedges—round the boulders wailed
And whimpered, wandering up and wandering down.
And ere it ceased, the stagnant stream began
To splash and whirl and dimple ;—now an arm,
And now a dripping head, and now a foot,
Flashed up and frisked and flirted in the moon ;
The water grew alive with elfin fry,
Quaint atomies, with fins and flapping tails,
That piped a reedy music, out of tune ;
Kelpy and Nix, and all their kith and kin,
Came at the summons, and a lovely throng
Of creatures, lissome-limbed and lithe, that shed
A sea-green glory round them as they swam.
All these swarmed round the shallop, and at a sign,
From her that steered, made clear a path through beds
Of osiers, and the tangled undergrowth,

And drove it o'er the shallows and the sands.
The questing monk, belated on his way,
Heard wondrous sounds that night—redoubling peals
Of elfin-laughter, and a rhythmic chant,
Eerie and exquisite, that took his breath
With rapture, floating seaward with the stream.

And seaward, like an arrow, shot the bark ;
The seething water rustled round its prow ;
The silver water glittered in its wake ;
The stars spun round and round ; the chalky flats
Broke, gradual, into beetling cliff and crag,
And soon Sir Galahad, in his drowse, was 'ware
Dim headlands loomed majestic through mist,
And the salt billows flecked him with their foam.

Then rose that mystic cry anew, and swept,
Shrill, o'er the darksome waves and through the
depths—
Till, from the under-world, surged up the brood

Of Ocean, the great sea-snake, coil on coil,
The kraken, demon-eyed and hundred-armed,
The sea-wolf and narwhal, mermaids and men—
A ghastly crew of scaled and slimy things—
With hiss, and hollo, and wild shriek they came,—
Dashing the spray in moon-bows overhead,—
And huddled, interlaced, with one combined
Impulsion, snout and fin and fold and tail,
They sent the shallop skimming through the foam,
Into the distance, fleet as shooting star.

“Woe for Sir Galahad!” wailed the Nix, and “Woe,
Woe for the noble knights!” the Kelpy sung.

A haze slid down the headlands o'er the main—
A blinding haze, that blotted out the stars ;
The shallop clove it, as a kestrel cleaves
The gloaming, hieing homeward to its nest.
A whirlwind wrenched the air, and swooping, made
Mad havoc of the sea, but wind and wave

The shallop stemmed, as stems an angry swan
The blasts and billows of its native tarn.
From out the foam, a jagged and hideous reef
Rose horrent—range on range of splintered crag.
With serpentine, swift motion, in and out,
And to and fro, betwixt the deadly saws,
The shallop flitted, and the reef was past.
But in its rear, a mighty mountain wall
Towered absolute—no outlet—on its brow
A blackness—smooth its shining front as steel.
Then roared the kraken, and the great sea-snake,
Uncoiling, clanked his jaws and hissed in ire.
Bubbled the thick shoal-water with the plunge
Of furious limb—with swish of tail and fin,
And the swart merman yelled beneath the moon.
But at the helm, the shadow, swaying, sung
A song of glamour, stern, that sank through rock,
And water, to the deep root of the world.
A shiver shook the air—the sea leaped up ;
And tossed its crest and shrieked in mad affright ;

Shuddered the mighty mountain wall ; its front
Grew blurred with cracks and ruinous fissures, rent
From base to battlement, and the loathly crew,
Cheered by the din and downfall and dismay,
Renewed their toil ;—with sharp, impetuous stroke,
The shallop smit the rock—a narrow cleft
Opened, grew wider, gaped—the bark shot through—
And lo ! the roseate morning in the heavens
Flushing the splendours of the syren seas !

Up sprang Sir Lancelot, his face a-blaze,
Compassed with glory : at his feet he saw
A white-limbed maiden, fair, as lily grown
In a God's garden. On her shoulders bare,
And ivory breast half-veiled, the sunshine fell
Gracious and golden,—laughed in her blue eyes,
And dallied in the dimples of her cheek.
With subtle smile she drew Sir Lancelot down
Beside her knee, and whispered in his ear—
Pointed with level finger to the land,

And thrilled him with the passion of her glance.
And through the web of her delightsome hair,
That shimmered o'er his forehead and his face,
And through the murmurous music of her speech,
He saw the lawny islets stud the sea,
Like bowers of beauty, with their blossoming
 woods,
And white-faced temples in the cedarn shade ;
He saw the sheeny pastures netted o'er
With silver brooks ; and faint and far away,
Translucent in the crystal morning air,
Myriads of mountain peaks magnificent,
Rose-tinted, pearl, opal, and amethyst,
Lifted, like gemmed tiaras, up to heaven.

Sir Lancelot laughed beneath the syren's spell—
Sir Lancelot laughed to feel her tresses dance
On cheek and chin, with motion of the tide ;
His face was haggard, but a love-light burned
Under his eyelids from a heart on fire.

By the smooth margin of the nearest isle
A troop of sportive nymphs beheld them come,—
A rosy rout, that dabbled in the surf,
Or shrieking, chased each other, fleet and slim
As Atalanta, o'er the shining sands.
They hailed Sir Lancelot, beckoning from afar,
And pointing to the blue, transparent deep,
Lured him to swim. Sir Lancelot leaped and swam,
Still laughing, as he battled with the spray ;
Then fifty frolic creatures, with a flash
Like a snow-avalanche, plunged, and met the knight
Midway, and cheering, drew him slowly on ;
A darksome waif, wreathed round with gleaming
 heads,
And overlaced with supple, sensuous arms,
He reached the shore—there, loud the girlish glee,
And kind the greeting ; with embrace and kiss
They bade him welcome to the happy isles—
Unbraced his armour, severed strap and tag,
Then dallied with his hair and with his beard,

And marvelled at the stature of the man,
And at his sinewy strength of chest and arm.

Passive, the knight went wheresoe'er they would.
They led him through the boskage of the shore,
And through the winding vales and odorous woods,
Till faint their frolic grew, and faint the chime
Of laughter and of song. They led him on
To festal bowers—to strange forbidden rites—
To joys accursed. Ah me! Sir Lancelot,
King Arthur's foremost knight! Sir Lancelot,
The crown of Christendom! Sir Lancelot,
The Knight of Christ! gone, gone, for ever gone!

Meanwhile, Sir Galahad, leaning 'gainst the mast,
Gazed, with astonished eyes and wavering mind.
From the blue gorges of the hills a voice
Came to him: "Bid thy sire farewell, farewell,
Sir Galahad; thou shalt see thy sire no more!"

But he, unheeding, heard ; the luscious air
Rained sweetness on him, and his senses swam.
Soothly, the wizard woman touched his hand—
Transfigured she—for when their glances met,
Sir Galahad fell a-tremble ;—he beheld
The pure, pale face of a belovèd maid,
His best-belovèd in the years that were—
Isonde, the Flower of Lyonesse, his betrothed,
Snatched from him by the Norsemen in a raid,
Ere yet his beard was grown ;—Isonde, the child,
His playmate on the broomy hills of home,
That decked his steed with ribbons, or the red
Ash-berries, and, when winter winds piped loud,
Rode by his side to see the wolf at bay.
“ Isonde ! ” he gasped—she nestled in his arms—
And, “ Galahad, good my brother,” soft she said,
“ Oh ! is it well with thee ? oh ! is it well ? ”
She said—“ The Norsemen held me in their bonds—
A weary time, ah me ! a weary time !
They brought me chains of gold and starry crowns,—

They brought me walrus tusks and furry coats,
And piles of frosty apples from the woods ;—
But oh ! the weary time, the weary time !
Three vikings wooed me ever, morn and eve.—
Fierce as their blasts, and salt as their sea-foam ;—
Civil their speeches, but they held me fast.—
“ O weary time ! ” she said, “ O weary time !
Last night a blessèd angel loosed my bonds,
Bade me go forth and seek my love afar,
And guide him to a land of joy and peace—
And I am here,—O Galahad,” soft she said,—
“ Say, is it well with thee—say, is it well ? ”

He held her folded in his fond embrace,
As by the grassy marge the shallop stayed ;
And they could hear the woodlands ring with song,
And see the glens and glades flush out with flowers.
Lightly to shore the agile maiden sprang ;
But he, in act to follow, paused, for lo !
From out a neighbouring copse, a snow-white bird

Fluttered, as chased by hawk, and, soaring, shrieked,
And shrieked anew, till all the welkin rang.
He turned to track its flight,—sweet Mother of God !
What vision fixed him ! Pale, in the deep sky,
Angels innumerable, shining tier on tier,
That circled upward, heavenward, higher and higher ;
And, floating in their midst, half-seen, half-hid
By flicker of white vans, the rosy cloud
That round the Sangreall burned at Camelot !
Sir Galahad watched their flitting, and was 'ware
The while they vanished, melting in the blue,
Each angel face looked down on him from heaven,
And every face was sad. He burst in sobs ;—
He staggered, conscience-stricken, and from depths
Of agony and shame and self-contempt,
He uttered such a cry as must have reached
To GOD THE FATHER, for a sudden night
Fell on the golden land and sapphire sea,—
And he dropped stark and senseless on the deck,
Nor heard the winnowing of the angelic wings,

Nor saw the shining multitude descend,
And ring the shallop round, and drive it far,
Far to blue reaches of the northern seas.

But when his swoon was o'er, Sir Galahad knew
A gracious savour lingered on his lip,
A sense of peace and pardon filled his soul.

V.

CORBONEK.

A FRAGMENT.

A WIZARD land—no bird beneath the sky,
No grazing creature in the plains,—no print
Of mortal footsteps on the solemn sands.

To Corbonek, the castle of the seers,
Built on the cloudy crag impregnable
Of Karduel, by a mighty seer of old,
Came Knights of Table Round, Pellès, the king,
His son, Sir Tor, Sir Percevall and Sir Bors,
That roof ne'er sheltered ;—roamer of the woods,
And waste, wild places he, God his sole stay.
And later, when the skies were keen with frost,

And northern lights flamed red, Sir Galahad came,
Weary of lonely wandering through the lands,
And thither led by impulse from on high.
For slumbering near El Arish, in the waste,
In the deep hush of the Arabian noon,
He dreamed, and saw a seraph in his dream,
God's fairest—that bent o'er him where he lay,
Pitiful, and with dewy fingers touched
His heavy lids, and bade him rise and see.
And he beheld the kingdoms of the world,
In vision—all its regions and its climes—
And through a purple glow of sweltering seas,
He saw the cliffs of Britain, and the dear
Familiar fields—saw, towering in their midst,
The skyey crag of Karduel and the keep
Of Corbonek, and from the heaven of heavens,
The angels of the Sancgreall, rank on rank,
Sink thitherward, with sweep of silver wings.
“ Behold, thine eyes are cleansed from earthly taint,”
The seraph said,—“ Go see the end—depart !”

Then he awoke, and girding up his loins,
He left the desert and the palms behind,
And came to Karduel in the wizard land.

Changed was the Flower of Knights from him that
sat

In the siege perilous, at Pentecost,
Long years ago, and vowed a solemn quest.
Still in his eyes the mystic splendour burned,
And still his lips were lit with happy smiles,
Unconscious, beautiful as gleams of heaven ;—
But wan his visage, withered as with fire,
And wasted all his strength—like Christ's true knight
Of Tarsus, much had he endured and known ;—
Perils by water, perils on the land,
Perils amongst false brethren, hunger, thirst,
Captivity, the torments of the flesh,
And warfare with the fiends accursed of God :
King Pellès, from the platform of the keep,
At midnight, holding vigil, saw him ride

Like a white wraith across the wizard plain ;
For white his steed—snow-white his armour all,
From helm to heel. King Pellès saw him come,
But heard no tramp of hoof, nor any sound
But of the wind, that seemed to break in song,
And of the stars of heaven that seemed to chime.

It was the Eve of the Nativity.

Quoth Pellès, " Know I now, the end is nigh,
And there is gladness in the House of God."

It was the Eve of the Nativity.

A little eerie maid, King Pellès' child,
Sat by the hearth-place, in the blaze, and crooned
An ancient lay of how the worlds begun.
How God the Father knelt beside the abyss,
And kneaded worlds of clay, with sweat of brow ;
And how the little cherubs brought Him fire,
And brought Him wind and water at His word,
And seeds of trees, and seeds of Eden flowers,

And tufts of tender grasses for the sward.
Six days He kneaded,—numberless the worlds,—
And when He sent them spinning into space,
Spinning with music and a flickering flame,
How all the little cherubs crowed with glee,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy !

So sang the maid, and through her singing, heard
Sir Galahad to his peers recounting all
The story of his travail and his toils ;
And this she heard that set her hair on end.

At Lammas-tide, across the windy fells,
Rode the good knight and wore the enchanted shield.
He saw the sun go down in swathes of fire ;
He saw the bearded comet track the stars ;
But strong in love and strong in faith he rode ;
To him nor rude the way, nor long the time,
To him the desert blossomed as the rose.

At nightfall to the holy house he came

Of Elam, folded in Northumbrian hills ;
An ancient cloister of Carthusian friars,
Well known of wayfarers for bounteous board
Full cup and jovial *Benedicite*.
But changed the place—wide open gaped the doors,
Forlorn the chambers, not a monk was there ;
Only the gray-haired porter at the gate
Sat frenzy-stricken, and babbled of a fiend,
Amongst the tombs, that harried God's elect,
And chased them, with intent to snatch their souls.
And while he babbled, shrill above the wind,
Sir Galahad heard a lamentable voice
Of anguish and despite, that like a knife
Pierced him, "Ride on, Sir Knight, I charge thee, ride!"
It said—"Nor vex me with increase of dole ;
I know thee, why thou comest, and whose thou art!"
Down from his steed Sir Galahad sprung and strode
Into the place of tombs, the voice his guide,
That ceased not,—moaning, muttering evermore.
It led him to a gruesome grave, wherein

Was laid the corse of an accursèd knight,
Self-slain, and buried 'neath the Church's ban.
“ Good saints, fight with me ! ”—quoth Sir Galahad,
 then,
And stooping, from its socket wrenched the stone,
And rolled it back :—a vapour of the pit
Steamed up, and with it rose a loathly fiend,
That shrieked as one that's set on fire of hell,
And clutched Sir Galahad with his snaky arms.
And lo ! on every grave there sat a ghost,
Watching the strife, with hollow, hungry eyes,
And the wind tossed the tatters of their shrouds.

Till cock-crow raged the battle ;—then the knight
Had vantage, and the baffled fiend fell back
Groaning—“ Thou art too strong—nor thou alone ;
Legions of happy souls, thou canst not see,
Fight for thee on the right hand and the left—
Cursèd be God and thou ! ”—and through the mirk
He fled, and tracked his flight with swirls of fire.

Trembled the little maid from top to toe ;
She saw the graves—on every grave a ghost,
And strove to drown the tale with silly song
Of Caspar, Melchior, and of Balthasar,
The monarch-magi that to Bethlehem came,
With piles of precious gums and store of gold.
And how the fair child Jesus flouted them,
And twitched their beards, and would not of their
 gifts,

But better liked the gentle steer, that licked
His dimpled fingers, and the ass that rubbed
His patient nose against the manger's side ;
And when the wise men, kneeling at His feet,
Worshipped the God-child, in an unknown tongue,
With mumbled prayers, and droning litanies,
How lowed the ox, and brayed the ass, and how
The Blessèd Babe wept sore, and would not cease
Till Mary Mother hushed Him in her arms.

* * * * *

VI.

THE SANCGREALL.

A VOICE spake out in Corbonek and cried,—

“ Behold the mystery of mysteries !

Blessèd be God in Christ ! Amen !

Depart,

Ye knights that are not of the Quest, for now

Shall these, the elect, be fed of God and filled.”

And from the hall King Pellès and his son

Passed, with submissive geste, and there was peace.

Then, in the ghostly glimmer of the morn,

Sir Galahad and his brethren of the Quest

Beheld a table set, of silver, bossed

With sculptures round about, whereon the GRAIL :

And, as it were from heaven, there came anon
Four angels, two by two, that on a throne
A mitred bishop bore, who stately sat,
This legend on his brow: "Joseph am I,
Christ's bishop, hight of Arimathee, whom erst
The Lord Jehovah helped, with stretched-out arm,
At Sarras, in the spiritual place.

Sweet knights," quoth he, "once in the flesh, these
eyne

Beheld the Christ on Rood;—these hands touched
His."

Then came twin angels, ministrant, and brought
Wax tapers, and a spotless linen cloth,
That, reverent, o'er the holy cup they laid.
The bishop, from his place beside the board,
Made semblance, as to consecrate the mass,
With lifted hands and moving lips that prayed;
And holding up a wafer, from the midst
There came a shape, in image of a child,
Red-visaged, bright as fire, that smote itself

Into the bread, whereat the knights were 'ware
The bread was fashioned of a fleshly man.
Then Joseph rose, and kissed the knights, and said :—
“ Dear servants of our Lord, this Christmas morn,
Shall ye taste meats no earthly lips e'er knew.”
And saying this he vanished, and in dread,
With foreheads drooped, they waited by the board.
And presently an angel raised the cloth,
And from the Holy Grail there came in sight
A vision, in the likeness of the Christ,
With wounded side, and piercèd feet and hands.
“ True knights,” quoth He, “ that into spiritual life
Through pain and passion of the flesh have passed,
Ye shall behold my hidden things this day.
Receive the meat ye have desired so long !”
Then, lifting from the board the blessed Grail,
He bade the knights draw nigh,—who, kneeling
 meek,
Received their Saviour, and were wrapped in joys
Past speech, and unconceived of mortal thought.

“ Now,” quoth the vision, “ have ye seen in part
And darkly, what, in clearer shape, ere long
Ye shall behold—my full intent made known—
At Sarras in the spiritual place.

For ye must hence this night, and bear the Grail
Out of the realm of Logris, evermore
Disherited for deeds of evil men,
And disbelief, and shameful falling off.

Therefore, make haste and journey, without pause,
Seaward ; and take the ship ye shall find moored
Beside the western strand, and so, farewell
To Britain, and the fields that ye have known.
For this I say,—of you, my chosen knights,
Two shall be taken from the wrath to come,
But one shall live to tell the tale, and lift
The hearts of men to God, by love and faith.”
And blessing them, He vanished out of sight.

So fleet across the frozen hills, and fleet
Beneath the icy glitter of the moon,

Rode the three knights of Christ, nor spake, nor
paused,

Until they reached the sea and found the ship,—

A lonely ship upon a lonely sea.

And on the deck they saw the table set

Of silver, carved about with sculptures rare,

That was in Corbonek, and in the midst,

The Grail, in crimson samite muffled up.

Great joy was theirs such sacred charge to keep :

And therewith, entering in the ship, they made

Pious obeisance ; but Sir Galahad fell

Praying, with upraised palms, that whensoever

He should beseech the Lord to set him free

Out of the prison of his earthly house,

The door should ope straightway, and he depart.

Long time he prayed—the sweat-drops on his brow—

As one that wrestles for a boon with tears

And eager intercession, o'er and o'er,

Until a voice replied :—“ Thus it shall be,

Knock and it shall be opened, faithful son.”

Then cried Sir Percevall in awe—"What prayer
Is this thou prayest?" To whom Sir Galahad—
In a great moonlight, lifting up his face,—
Made answer :—"When this morn mine eyes beheld
The cup unveiled, and o'er my lips had passed
The savour of His flesh and of His blood,
Such bliss possessed me as I ne'er had known.
Wherefore, my travail o'er, I would have leave
To quit my mortal coil and be with Him,
For wot I well, though mortal in the flesh,
My soul shall live, and glory to behold
God's Trinity in heaven, and all day long
Worship the majesty of Christ, my King."

Thus spake the twain, and while they spake, the ship
Moved in a solemn swiftness o'er the sea ;
Nor any wind dared blow, nor any wave
Ripple,—but perfect calm and silence sweet.
And ere the dawn, such heavy slumber fell
On all the knights, that prone on deck they lay,

Trance-bound and captive in a mesh of dreams.
And day by day, and night by night, the ship
Moved in a solemn swiftness o'er the sea,
And not a sail was seen, nor any shore
Ever,—but perfect calm and silence sweet.
But on the seventh, and the Sabbath morn,
The knights awoke, and lo! the ship was moored
Beside a strand, with headlands sloping down,
Feathery with palms, and fair with asphodel,
And through the winding glens they saw afar
Sarras, the sacred city, on its rock,
That glittered like a diamond all a-blaze,
And glowed with rose-light of the risen sun.

So o'er the plains, and by the upland paths,
The questing knights their precious burden bore
To Sarras city. But along the way
Virtue went out from it and saving gifts.
The maimed were healed, the blind received their
sight,

The lame rose up and walked, the cripple danced
Before them, and the dumb broke out in praise.
Then to the king in Sarras came this tale—
A king that knew not Joseph, and he bade
His satraps watch the gate, who seized the knights
With outrage, scourged them through the city streets,
And thrust them in a cave beneath the rock.
Moreover, being evil, to their cell
He sent his torturers ; but nor rack, nor chain,
Nor fire, nor any anguish of the flesh,
Had power against them ; evermore they saw
The Vision of the Grail ; their dungeon shone
With splendour, as of Paradise ; their feet
Trod deep in flowers : and winds enchanted brought
Murmurs of singing waters to their ear.
They said, “ This place is Heaven ! we cannot fall ;
The everlasting arms do hold us up.”

But ere the year was out, it came to pass
The king fell sick, and moved to ruth by fear,

Or late remorse, he made his satraps bring
The knights before him, marked with speechless
awe

The glory in their faces—touched their hands,
Deeming they must be angels in disguise—
And, with a muttered prayer for pardon, died.

Then, through the length and breadth of Sarras,
rose

This cry, that of the knights should one be king,
Sir Galahad ;—and the nobles brought the crown
And set it on his head, and to the throne
Led him, with sound of trumpets and of shawms,
Hailing him king in Sarras. And the throng,
Around the palace gates, shouted with joy—
“ Long live the knight of Christ! long live the
king!”

So to a palace chamber, far apart,
Sir Galahad, and his brethren of the Quest,

Conveyed the Grail, in crimson samite wrapped,
And set it in its place ; and every day
They entered in and prayed, and were refreshed,
Tasting the joys of heaven. And all men blessed
The knights of Christ, for whensoever they rode
Abroad, in populous city, or champaign,
Virtue went out from them, and saving gifts.
The sick were solaced and made whole—the poor
Nurtured—the fainting hearts renewed by faith.
All evil things fled from them, or became
Submissive workers of the will divine ;
And the land brightened in the smile of God.

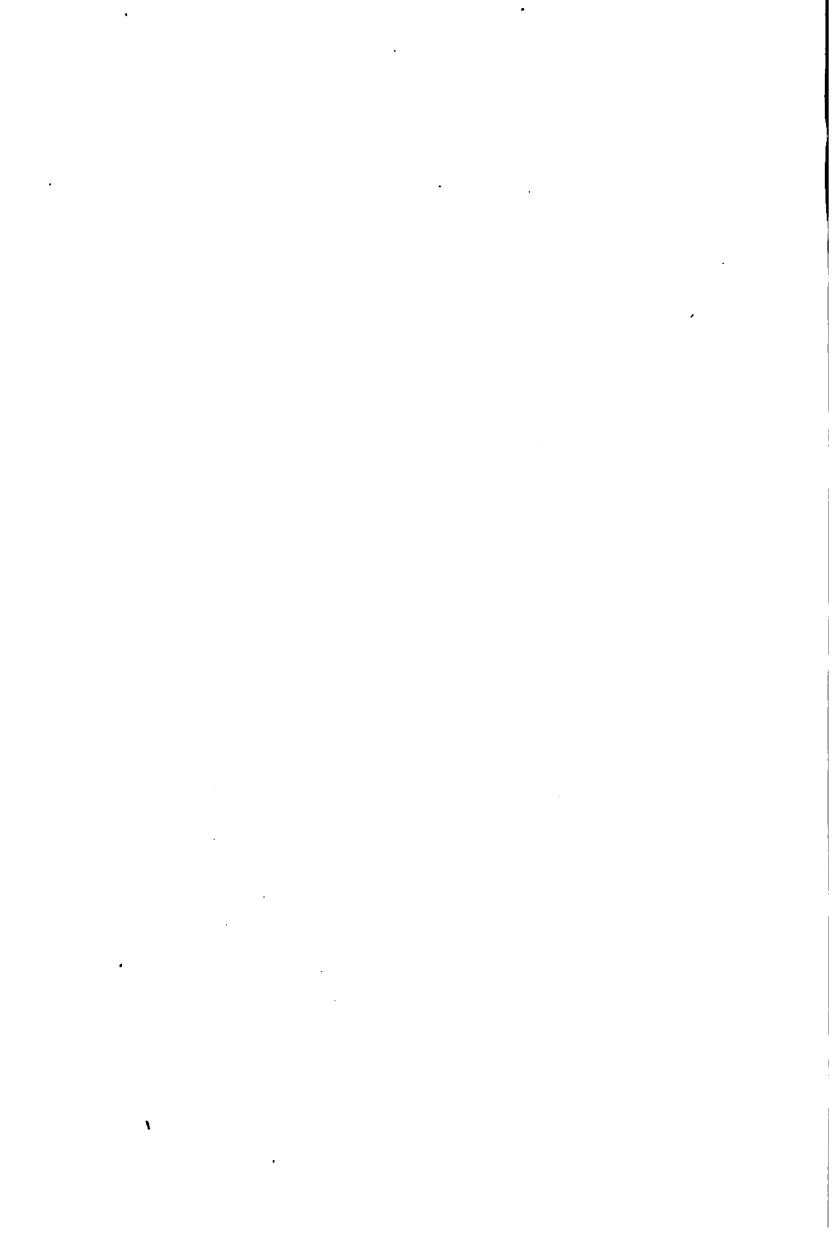
It was the morn of the Nativity.
Early, at the uprising of the sun,
Sir Galahad and his fellows, entering in
The palace chamber, saw the cup unveiled,
And one, who knelt beside the board, in robes
And mitre of a bishop, with, round about—
As though 'twere the Lord Jesu Christ himself,—

A fellowship of angels. And they sung
Anthems and benedictions passing sweet.
These ended, after pause, the Bishop spake :—
“ Galahad, true servant of the Lord, give ear !
I am that Joseph whom, whilome, thou sawest
In Britain, Christ’s first bishop in this land,
Against Mahound, and giver of the shield
Thou wearest, blazoned with a sacred sign.
And I am here this day, to hold thee up
And give thee sustenance of meats divine,
Lest thou shouldst faint and falter at the last.
Make strong thine heart—the hour is nigh at hand.
Darkly, as in a glass, hast thou discerned
The hidden things of God ;—now, face to face,
Thou shalt behold, and know as thou art known.”
Then shook Sir Galahad sore, as one that sees
Or half sees, in the body, what exceeds
The body’s sufferance,—and he cried aloud :—
“ Dear Lord, I thank Thee, Thou hast heard my
prayer,

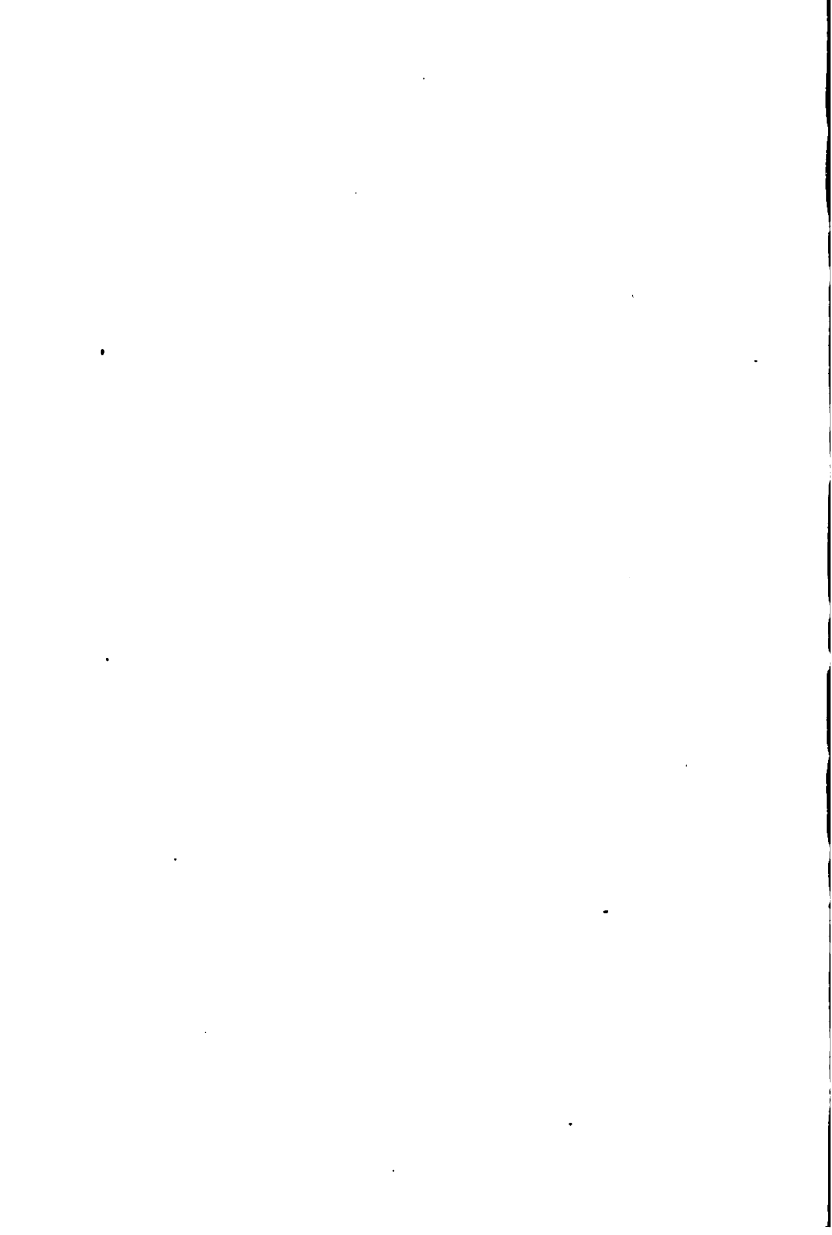
And given me my desire!—Oh! blessèd Lord,
Now would I fain depart and be with Thee,
If so Thou willest!” Thereat the Bishop took
Between his palms the body of our Lord,
And gave it to Sir Galahad, and he ate ;
And all his face grew bright, until it shone
With a pure glory, past belief of men,
As God were gazing through his mortal eyes.
So turning to Sir Percevall and Sir Bors,
He kissed them thrice, with gesture of farewell,
Foreknowing ’twas for ever in this world.
But rough Sir Bors he bade depart, straightway,
To Arthur’s Court at Camelot, and tell
To all the Table Round his wondrous tale.
“ Nor rest,” quoth he, “ from seeking, till thou find
Sir Lancelot, my sire, and in God’s name
Bid him remember this unstable world.”
Then suddenly he fell asleep in Christ,
And a great multitude of angels bore

His soul to heaven. And out of heaven there
came

The semblance of a Hand, that, reaching down,
Caught up the Grail, and no man saw it more.



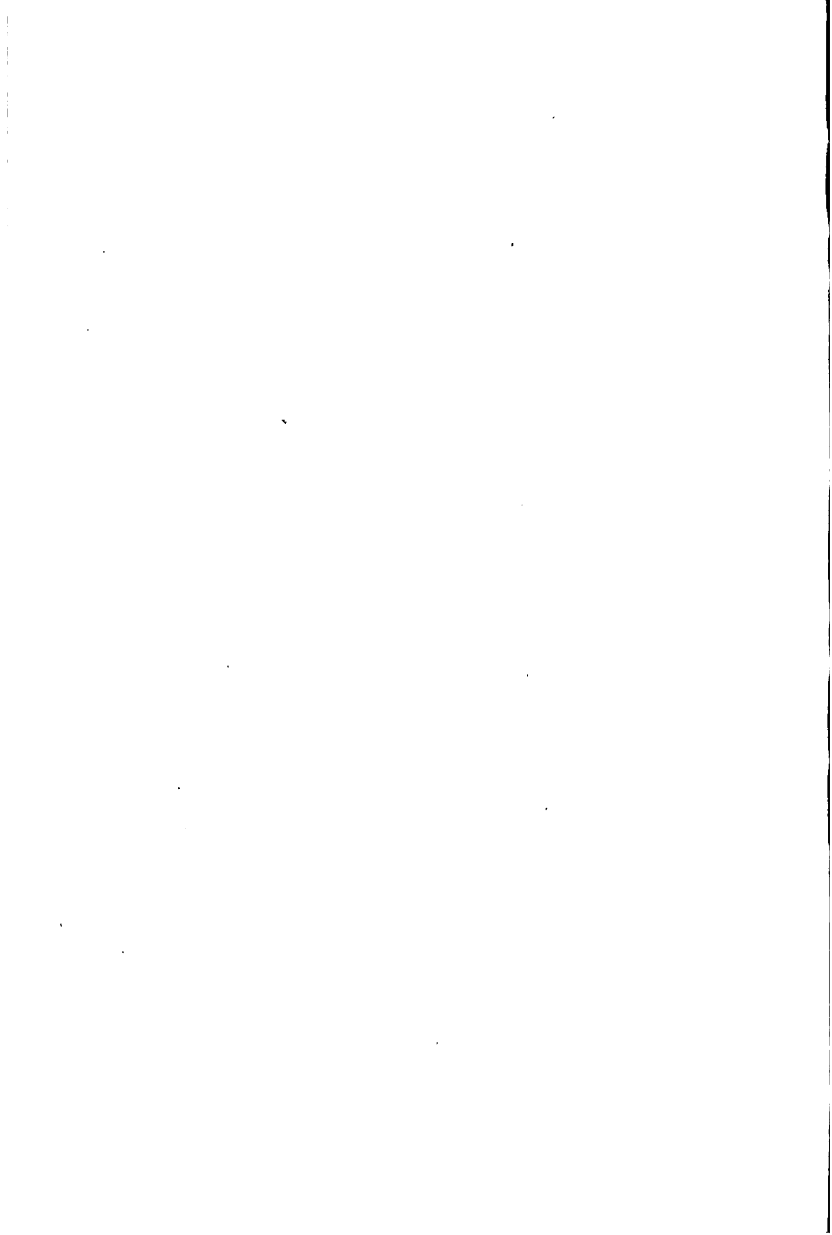
THE SWORD OF KINGSHIP.



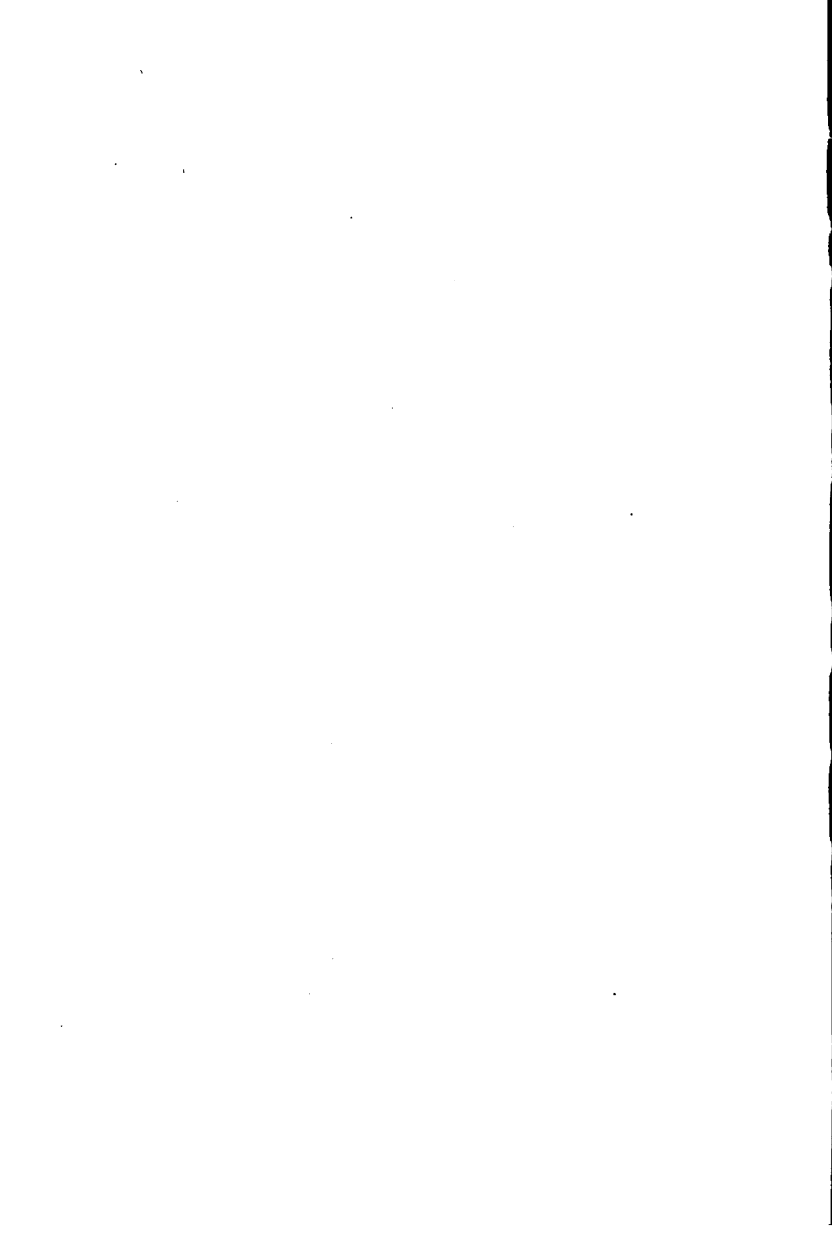
To

My Wife

*this Poem is offered, under the
Holly and Ivy of the Christmas Hearth,
with Love and Benison.*



I CROWN thee, dear, with little wilding flowers,
That star the mosses on my hill of song ;
Anemone, harebell, and a tiny throng,
Born in the sunshine of blue summer hours.
I tress them into garlands, or in showers
Shed their pale petals on thy forehead fair,
Or weave them in meanders of thy hair,
Then sink back, languishing for loftier powers,
And crowns less mortal-frail. This hill of song,
Under its mosses, next its fiery heart,
Holds amethyst, emerald, opal, set apart
For royal uses—but my need is strong :—
Flowers wither, summer waneth, heart, be bold—
Delve, dig, snatch bravely royal gem and gold !



THE SWORD OF KINGSHIP.



AT Christmas-tide, while wassail mirth ran high,
To royal Uther, by his queen Igrayne,
Was born a son ; whom, wrapped in swaddling-
clothes

Of cloth of gold, the monarch took, and charged
Two knights and two fair maids to bear away,
Adown the castle stair and through the night,
To one that waited by the postern door.
No question to be asked, no word be said.

Blank faces wore the knights, and puzzled looks
And dazed the damsels, but the king's command

Was peremptory ; so adown the stair,
Close-clasped and warm, their precious freight they
bore,

Across the courtyard, underneath the stars.
Beside the door stood Merlin, who the babe
Took in his arms, and, without word or sign,
Departed. Like a wraith beyond the moat
He stole, and vanished on the windy wold ;
And as he vanished, lo ! a luminous star
Rose in the heaven, and brightened as it rose,
And broadened, till the land was full of light.
And one fair maid,—of sixteen summers she,—
Lifting her lily face in white amaze,
Said, “Sure our blessèd Lord is born again !”

Athwart the wold, and o'er the untrodden snow,
Passed Merlin, a weird shadow, without pause.
Around him, as he went, the wind, with sound
Of viols low and sweet, sang lullaby ;
Above him, in its orbit, moved the star,

To guide him in the way that he should go.*

It led him to a donjon, perched aloft,
Like falcon's eyrie, on a spire of crag—
Black chasms in front, and at its base the sea,—
Sir Ector's donjon, in the western wilds.
Beside his yule-fire sate that peerless knight,
And read, from monkish page, the legend old
Of the Nativity—the Orient Star,
The mystic Magi, with their gift of myrrh,
The God-child in the manger. Dame Iseult,
His spouse, with awe-dilated eyes, drank in
The wondrous story. At their feet lay stretched
A shaggy wolf-hound, huge of jaw and limb ;
And nestling in the savage creature's fur,
Round-cheeked and ruddy, slept their latest born.

No footfall—but, instinctive, both were 'ware

* The old chivalric romance writers established a sort of parallel between King Arthur and the Christ.

Of an unwonted presence in the hall—
Merlin's, whose ghostly shadow blurred the light.
To good Sir Ector salutation brief
The wizard gave—then, with obeisance, laid
His burden on the noble lady's knees,
Who called upon her saints. The bands unswathed
Behold, the babe lay, likè a folded rose,
In slumber, but anon, roused by the glare,
First crowed, then whimpered, till the pitying dame
Broke out in yearnings as of mother-love,
And caught him to her breast, and gave him suck,
And cherished him thenceforth as her own child.
And soon a priestly man, by Merlin sent,
Baptized the boy, and ARTHUR was his name.

Ere long the king fell sick, and while he lay,
Sore-stricken, a marauding host o'erran
His borders, and waged battle with his knights
At vantage, and his vassals vexed and slew.
Then up spake Merlin : “ King, no longer bide

Prone on thy couch, but to the strife of spears
Wend forth, in litter borne, if such must be,
High on the backs of men ; for if thy foes
But see thee in the van, the day is thine !”

So was it done as Merlin had devised.
They bore the King in litter to the field—
A royal presence, with a deathly face—
And by St Alban’s, on a wild March morn,
'Mid road and river, met a mighty horde
Of Norsemen, and that day Sir Ulfus hight,
And stout Sir Brastias, did grand feats of arms ;
And in the Northern battle Uther’s men
Fought and o’ercame, and all his foemen fled.

And straight the King to London hied, and made
Much joy of his success ; but, smitten anew
With mortal fever, three whole nights and days
Speechless he lay, and sore his barons grieved,
And help besought of Merlin in their need.

Quoth Merlin, "Help is none—Heaven's will be done!
But take this counsel,— at to-morrow's dawn,
Seek the King's presence, and, with God's good grace,
His tongue shall be unloosed, and he shall speak."
And on the morrow, when the rising sun
Reddened the east, and from the sloping hills
Rolled the mists upward, knights and barons went
With Merlin to the King, and Merlin spake:—

"By Christ, and the thrice-blessèd Trinity,
King, I adjure thee, make thy purpose clear!
Shall Arthur, thy true son, when thou art gone,
Rule o'er thy realm and sit upon thy throne?
Before thy lieges all, and before God,
Speak, my Lord Uther, let thy will be known!"

Whereat King Uther turned him on his bed,
And moaned, and raised a ghastly face at length,
In the blear light, and crossed himself, and said:—
"Before my lieges all, and before God,

I bless my son ! God's blessing and the Saints'
Befall him ! He is King. My work is done.
But if he claim not this my crown and realm,
Or make not good his claim, with knightly feats,
And kingly wisdom, as befits my son,
Perish my blessing—it is none of his !”

Then suddenly Utherpendragon dropped
Dead on his couch, as drops a cankered pine
When the bolt cleaves it, and all heads were bowed,
And all hearts sorrowed ; and with regal pomp,
And long procession down cathedral aisles,
'Neath pall, and floating plume, and level shield,
They bore him to his rest. And Igrayne wept.

Then year on year in grievous jeopardy
The realm remained. For prince and paladin
Made trial of their might, in deadly feuds,
With plot and counterplot, through covert hope
Of kingship ; and the sea grew black with barks

Of Vikings, that like kestrels round the coast
Hovered, and froze the people's hearts with fear.
At dead of night the hills broke out a-blaze
With beacon-fires—wild Norsemen scoured the plains,
And drove the herds—and wives, that sat at home,
Wept wearily for those that came no more.

But, when the gloom was deepest, Merlin prayed
Th' Archbishop Engelbert, who held his court
At Canterbury, in his diocese,
To issue edicts, bidding all true knights
Repair to London, at the time of Yule,
On pain of penance and anathema.
“ For peradventure, on that day,” quoth he,
“ On which our Saviour Lord from heaven came down,
God may vouchsafe a miracle, and show
Whose head shall wear the crown.” The Primate did
As Merlin counselled, and the barons came,
Obedient, to the tryst. The frosty roads
Rang with the dint of hoofs. Long trains of knights,

Pages, and dames in litters, silken-draped,
And pursuivants, in brilliant tabards, wound,
Like party-coloured serpents o'er the meads,
And through the snowy passes of the hills.

On Christmas-eve, at nightfall, a great host
Encamped about the minster, and a troop
Of holy men from tent to tent passed round,
And shrieved the knights, and left them pure of
 sin,
And ready for the chrism, and for the crown.

In clouds the Christmas morning dimly dawned ;—
Gray gloomed the minster aisles ; but ere the mass
Was ended, an effulgent sunshine broke
Through the east oriel, and all men were 'ware
That by the altar stood a snow-white stone,
Four-square, and on its summit, in the midst,
An anvil, holding in its iron bulk
A naked sword, along whose edges ran

This legend : “ **Whoso plucks me from my place
Is England’s rightful king. Amen. Amen.**”

Then shook the multitude with sudden stir
Of passion, as the woodland summits shake,
When swooping from a cloud, Euroclydon,
The storm-wind, strikes them ; but the Primate knelt,
And quelled the growing tumult with his prayer,
And, after, preached of peace and pure intents.

The benediction uttered, one by one,
Princes and Paladins, he bade approach,
And try their prowess on the magic sword.
Then were gaunt arms of Titan strength outstretched,
To which the sinews clung, like knotted cords ;—
Then was the sword clutched by as gnarlèd fists,
As his that slew the Hydra. Faces flushed
Purple, and foreheads became ridged, like backs
Of Wiltshire wolds ; broad shoulders stooped and
rose ;
Oaths, fierce as thunder-claps, were smothered back

'Twixt gnashing teeth—in vain, in vain, in vain !
Immovable within its sheath, the sword
Stood, its gold legend glittering in the sun.

Then spake the Primate : “ God’s Elect is not
Amongst you here this day. Now note my will.
Let ten true knights be chosen, of noble strain,
And constant, day and night, keep watch and ward,
Beside the stone and the miraculous sword,
Till he shall come, who is ordained of Heaven.”

So said, so done. Ten knights of noble strain
Were chosen, five by five, to keep the watch.
And the suns rose, and set, and rose again,
And down the frozen aisles the winter’s wind
Blew shrilly, and the winter moon shone cold.
And not a knight in Christendom but tried
To win the sword except the Elect of God.

It chanced, on New-Year’s Day, a joust was given

With open lists ; and to the tourney came
Sir Ector, with his handsome son, Sir Key,
Just dubbed a knight, and Sir Key's brother-in-arms,
Arthur, a stalwart youth, straight as a pine ;
With eyes as blue and bland as the June heaven,
Broad brow set round with curls, and royal mouth,
Firm-shut and strong. These twain rode side by side,
Scanning the silken litters as they passed,
And chuckling when the rose on maiden's cheek
Deepened to damask at their saucy smiles ;
But near the lists, the scatter-brained Sir Key
Bethought him he had left his sword at home,
And prayed young Arthur to ride back at speed,
In quest of it. This did he ; but arrived
Before the mansion, every door was shut,
And window barred ; Sir Ector's dame had gone
To see the jousts, with her bower maidens all.
Then Arthur stamped a hasty foot, and vowed
That not for want of glaive Sir Key should miss
His jousting. " To the church I'll hie, and snatch

The sword they prate of from the wizard stone !”
Wide open stood the minster doors, and deep
The sacred silence ; of the watching knights
No vestige ; tournay sports had lured them thence.
Straight up the aisle young Arthur strode, and bent
A reverent knee beside the altar step,
And breathed a prayer ; then plucked the magic
sword

Out of the anvil, brandished it aloft,
And, without further tarrying, hurried back,
Alert, to find Sir Key. But he, with awe,
Gazed at the golden legend on the blade,
And called his sire, and cried aloud : “ This brand
Is mine, and mine, too, England’s realm and crown !”
Much marvelled good Sir Ector ; but in doubt
Of what was best, to the Lord Primate went,
And told his tale ; who, when the jousts were o’er,
Bade all the knights and nobles meet anew,
Within the minster walls. There questioned he
By what strange sleight Sir Key had won the sword ?

Sir Key, with puckered lips and stammering speech,
The truth avowed. "Youth," said the Primate then,
Turning to Arthur, "since the skill was thine
To take the sword, say, canst thou thrust it back
Into its iron sheath?" "Small feat were that!"
Quoth Arthur, with a smile; and, stepping up,
Into the anvil thrust the naked blade.
"Now pluck it forth, Sir Key!" the Primate urged,
"And prove thy right." And bold Sir Key began
To tug, to haul—and tugging, hauling still,
The sweat-drops rolled in rivers down his cheeks,
And angry flashes glinted from his eyes.
Then Arthur jeered him: "Nay, hast lost thy wits,
Good gossip mine? See, 'tis no more than this!"
And, with the slightest twitch of fingers twain,
Out came the sword, and a wild sunbeam ran
Along the steel and lit the legend up,
In diamond sparkles. Then Sir Ector knelt
At Arthur's feet, and hailed him Lord and King,
While bold Sir Key stood blushing, half in wrath,

And half compunction. But the assembled peers
Looked on, with lowering brows and sullen lips,
Or muttered : " It were shame this nameless boy
Should sit on Uther's throne and wear his crown ! "
And soon a conflict rose, and swords were bared
In menace, till the Primate spake, and bade
Young Arthur thrust the sword into its place,
And tarry further ordeal, at the feast
Of Candlemas ensuing—the ten knights,
Meanwhile, to keep inviolate watch and ward.

This did they, five by five, as at the first.
And the suns rose, and set, and rose again ;
And down the frozen aisles the winter's wind
Sang shrilly, and the winter moon shone cold.

But as at Christmas, so at Candlemas,
Save Arthur's only, not an arm was found
To wield the sword, though from the Cornish hills
Came Caradoc, a caitiff knight, of frame

Like to Goliath's ; heavy was his spear,
As any weaver's beam—his stature huge,
His rigid chest, a rock—on either fist,
Six fingers—on each monstrous foot, six toes.
This giant, with a thunderous laugh, that woke
The echoes of the hills three leagues away,
Thrust back to right and left the puny throng,—
As sheers a ship its course through summer seas,—
And, to the altar striding, clutched the sword
Contemptuous, as it were a baby's toy,
And pulled. Loud laughed the multitude, to see
The tawny Cyclops foaming at the mouth,
Furious, because no whit the blade would budge.
He pulled with strength that would have torn an oak
From its seven centuries' hold beneath the rocks—
He pulled till, spent and breathless, his eyes stood
Out of his head, with wonder and despite.
But Arthur, on a merry mischief bent,
Plucked forth the glaive, and springing down the
steps,

Fenced at Goliath for a minute's space,
With rapid cut and thrust, and so achieved
The giant's downfall and discomfiture ;
For gibes and jeers, like whistling arrow-flights,
Hailed on him ; till, with buffetings of all
That crossed his path, out of the doors he dashed,
Half mad, and like an evil hurricane,
Rushed howling homeward to his Cornish hills.

But vain these portents of the Elect of God.
The peers, obdurate, claimed a new delay
Till Easter, and the Primate, moved with hope,
By sage concessions, to enforce Heaven's will,
Ordained fresh trial on that holy day.

And still the knights kept watch beside the stone,
With pacings to and fro, till through the pane
A blander moon shed silver on the sword,
And the wind, wandering 'mid the pillars, brought
Odours and omens of the coming Spring.

•

But as at Candlemas, at Easter too,
One issue, one resolve,—defeat, delay,—
With strife amongst the noblest—gauntlets flung
And lifted, ay, and knightly battle waged
“À outrance,” in the lists. The Archbishop, then,
Convoked the estates of Britain, for the eve
Of Pentecost, in ultimate ordeal ;—
Too long, he said, had England’s realm remained
Kingless, with peril gathering round the throne.

So the suns rose, and set, and rose again,
In slow succession, till the season turned,
And to the knights in vigil came the scent
Of beanflowers, and the smell of greening corn.

* * * * *

Over the pleasant meads, at Pentecost,
The minster bells rang out a merry chime,—
Over the bean-tufts, with their brindled bloom,
Over the corn-fields, with their waving corn ;

No cloud in heaven, and the long-harassed earth
Calm, with the foretaste of a rest to come.

At gloaming, back the minster portals rolled,
And knights and nobles, in a stormy throng,
Choked nave and chancel. Vespers o'er, at once
The Primate summon'd whoso dared resist
God's judgment, thrice made manifest, to brave
The final ordeal. Then upsprang a band
Of paladins, such as the world ne'er saw,
Fit framers of the famous Table Round,
Heroic shapes, that with untoward fate
Strove, as the demigods of heathen tale
Strove in their war with Heaven—like them to fall.
For vain their chivalry and pure intents—
Vain strength of soul and strength of arm—all vain !
Immovable within its sheath, the sword
Stood, its strange legend burning like a flame.

Then Arthur, at the Primate's bidding, came,—

A youth as fair as he who in the vale
Of Elah, with a sling and with a stone,
The champion of the Philistines o'erthrew,
Before the hosts of Israel. Meek he knelt
Beside the altar, while the priestly palms
Were laid, in blessing, on his comely head,
All clustered over with thick golden curls.
"King Arthur, God's Elect, draw forth the sword!"
And lightly stepped he, lightly drew the sword,
And having drawn it, lo! a luminous star
Rose in the heaven, and brightened as it rose,
And broadened, till the fane was full of light.
And in that sudden glory men were 'ware
That, from their station by the altar side,
Anvil and stone had vanished like a dream.
Then swift emotion shook the hearts of all,
Half awe and half remorse; and with a sound
Of seas that surge, and sweep o'er shingly shores,
A tumult grew and spread, and broke at length
Into a vehement shout, "Long live the King!"

Long live King Arthur !” from ten thousand throats,
Not one dissentient. Through the minster doors
The uproar burst, and filled the streets, and ran
Like wildfire through the town—beyond the town—
For as the lightning speeds from cloud to cloud,
So sped the gladness through the length and breadth
Of England, till its every corner rang
With universal shouts of jubilee.

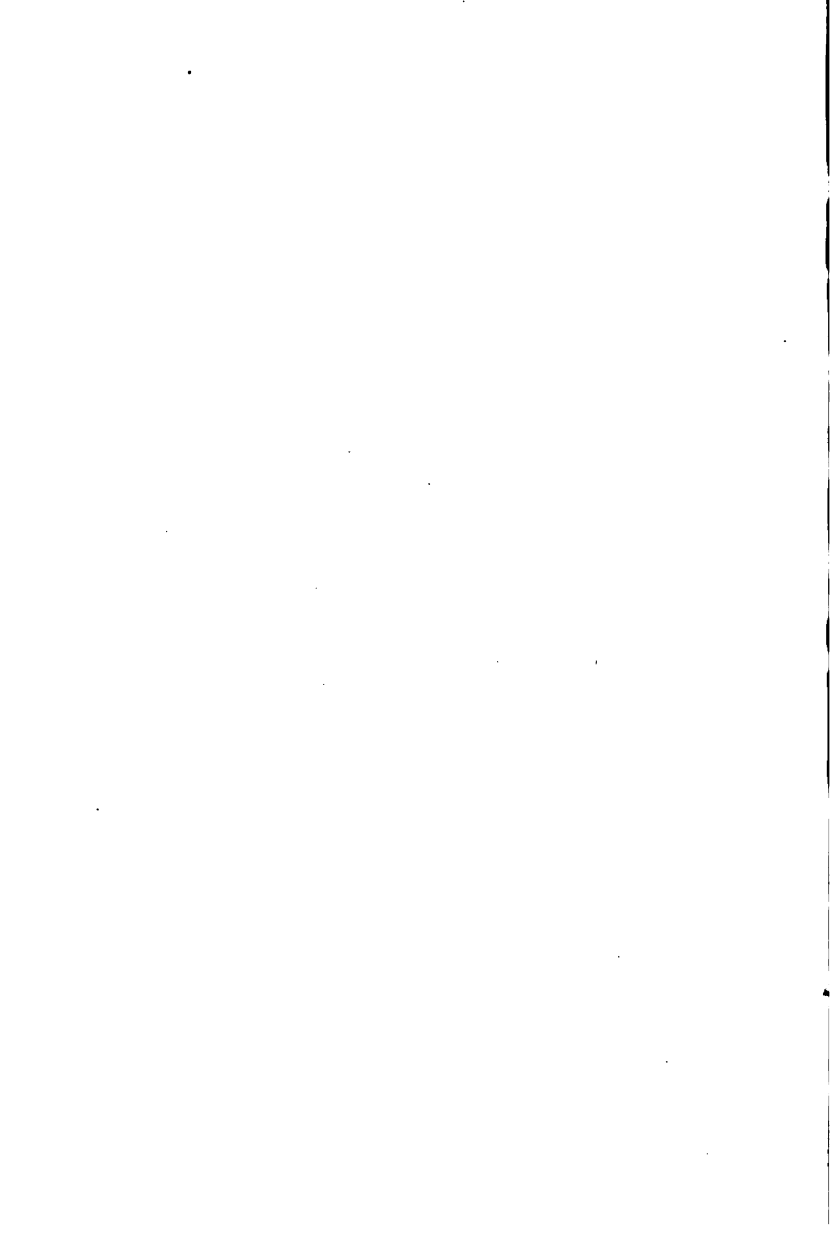
And the wind swept the shoutings out to sea,
And paled the Vikings’ ruddy cheeks with fear,
And drove their black barks home to Norroway.

So Arthur won King Uther’s crown and throne !
And when his seat was sure, and not a knight—
Save caitiff Caradoc, the Cornish bear—
But had sworn fealty, wizard Merlin told
To him and to Igrayne his wondrous tale.
Great joy had Queen Igrayne ; her widowed heart
Waxed warm with household cheer ; but evermore
To good Sir Ector and his dame the King,

From old respect and fond familiar use,
Clung, with the love and duty of a son.
Sir Ector, his high chancellor he made,
Sir Key, his seneschal ; and when the dame
To Camelot in early summer came,
He saw, and ran to meet her from afar,
And kissed her mouth, and kissed her wrinkled cheeks,
And knelt before her, as had been his wont,
For daily blessing, in the years that were.

Here ends the story of the magic sword
Of Arthur, Builder of the Table Round.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



MY CASTLE BY THE SEA.

I LIVE alone, alone,
In my Castle by the Sea—
In my Castle, reared on its giant throne
Of agate and ivory.
From the topmost tower of all,
High up the porphyry stair,
At the sound of my crystal clarion's call,
I hear a sweet star-music fall
Through the blue and balmy air.

And, aha! when the night-wind pipeth loud
In my nets I catch a sunset cloud,
By its golden hair;

I catch the cloud by its golden hair—
I drag it adown the porphyry stair—
 To my wizard bower,
 Ere the darkness lower,
My dainty prize I bear,
And it gloweth all night as in the sky,
 So rosily, so rosily !

Oh ! the pale moonlights, the merry moonlights !
Down on the sands in the summer nights,
 I sit by the sleeping sea.
At the sound of my crystal clarion's call,
A sea-maid cometh, fairest of all,
 Oh ! fair as love is she !—
She twineth her arms my neck around,
She laugheth low, with a silver sound,
 She kisseth me tenderly.

She hath brothers, the wave below,
 And a little sister fair,

And friends a-many, youths, I trow,
And maids, but past compare,
She voweth, she voweth by the Sea,
Is her love for me, her love for me !

Sometimes, when I look through her great dark
eyes,

I can see the love—oh ! it lies, it lies
Deep in her soul, where the life-springs rise.
It grows in her soul, but in her face
It blossoms in passion and tender grace,
And from cheek and brow, from chin and lip,
Its odorous honey-dew I sip:—

Oh ! my flower of flowers !

She blooms on my breast through the long night-
hours ;

While still, in its dreams, the doting sea
Crooneth and murmureth, o'er and o'er,
Its old love ditty to the shore,
So drowsily, so drowsily !

When the moon dips
Her face 'neath the brine, in green eclipse,
A voice comes sounding up from the sea ;
A wandering voice, that sinks and swells
And gurgles and trills, alternately,
As it soars from the depths of its ocean dells,
Through tangled corals, and twisted shells.
And at sound of that voice, she may not stay—
Fleeth my sea-love, away, away !
With a cloudy woe on her forehead fair,
And a stifled moan ;
Climbeth she never the castle stair—
I live alone !

I live alone !
Ever the wind saith, in an undertone,
So it must be ;—
Ever, in storm and calm, and frolic game,
With its grand, surging monotone, the same
Declares the sea.

Once said I, "*Nay, no more alone, alone!*"—
My castle rocked upon its giant throne,
Rocked too, my life. A deathly hue o'erspread
Earth, air, and sea—with faltering feet I fled
Up the steep porphyry stair—my clarion's call
Wailed on the blast, but now no more, no more,
Through ether, from the blue, invisible shore,
I heard the silver-sweet star-music fall—
But thunders without cloud—an angry roll,
Then utter blackness, into which my soul
Sank shuddering, driven, by some o'ermastering
 stress,
Into a waste, a void, a nothingness,
Drear, hopeless—was it death?... Oh love! oh
 life!
Suddenly, o'er the tossing tempest's strife,
A clear voice pierced from wave to firmament,
Cleaving my torpor :—" I repent, repent"—
I murmured, struggling—then, with feeble moan,
" Be it so! evermore *alone, alone!*"

Joy, joy! the blackness melted into light ;
Strong stood my Castle on its giant height ;
The rocks of agate and of ivory
Shone, flushed with sunset, mirrored in the sea ;
Sweet as of old, through purple glooms anew,
Fell the star-music, with the falling dew,
And down the porphyry stair. . . Oh! clasping hands !
Hers, my dear sea-maid, smiling on the sands.

I live alone ! O mariner bold,
Sail swiftly by, sail swiftly by !
Turn, pilgrim, wending o'er the wold,
Oh, come not nigh ! oh, come not nigh !

Sail on, sail on, O mariner bold,
Though you see the windows manifold
Of this my Castle by the Sea,
Red-litten, flashing royally.

Turn, pilgrim, turn, though you hear afar
A chiming of harps and the merry jar

Of voice and wine-cup and revelry,
From this, my Castle by the Sea.

No mortal foot must scale its walls,
No mortal pace its wizard halls,
Or look from its windows o'er the sea,
Down the rocks of agate and ivory.

From the topmost tower, at evening's fall,
Whoso heareth my clarion's call,
Let him flee, let him flee, unrestingly,
Or, aha ! when the night-wind pipeth loud,
I may catch in my nets a *thunder*-cloud,
 By its venomous, snaky hair,
And plucking the lightnings from their shroud,
 Hurl down the porphyry stair,
Wreck and ruin and misery
From this, my Castle by the Sea !

AMONG THE TOMBS.

HARK ! what is that weird droning ?
Is it the wind's wild moaning ?—
Ah, no ! 'tis the dead are groaning,
Their coffin-lids below.

Hark ! muffled voices sighing—
“ Woe, woe for the dead ! ” they 're crying—
“ Oh ! angel of God undying,
Sound, sound thy trumpet now ! ”

'T WAS IN THE BLEAK DECEMBER.'

'T WAS in the bleak December,
On a dark and dreary day,

I heard the waves lamenting

To the headlands grim and gray—

“Oh! the wind has rest from blowing,

And the flower has rest from growing,

But for our sad billows' flowing,

No rest, no rest!” said they.

Thereat, to the wailing waters,

The headlands grim and gray

Made answer, softly sighing,

On that December day—

“There is joy for the bird in loving,

There is joy for the cloud in roving,

But for us, for us, unmoving,
No joy, no joy!" said they.

Ah! then to the waves of ocean,
To the headlands grim and gray,
Sweet angels seemed to whisper,
On that December day—
"Cease, cease, your lamentation!
Seek rest in resignation—
Seek joy in duty's station,
And love in all!" said they.

HOME.

BROAD lands and stormy seas lie spread

Between me and my home,

But still its ancient paths I tread,

Still round its walls I roam.

A stranger hath my heritage,

But he'll ne'er be rid of me ;—

I climb the stairs, I pace the floors,

I pass unchallenged through the doors,

A ghost no eye can see.

I stand in the dewy morning now,

Just as I stood of old,

Under the sweet laburnum bough,

With its showery green and gold ;

I thread the orchard alleys dim,
I hear the breezy sound
Of the wind that ripples the leaves o'erhead,
And I see the apple-blossoms shed
Their snow-flakes on the ground.

Poor garden ! changed and sad its plight !
It seems to peak and pine ;
I miss a world of sweet delight
It owned in "auld langsyne ;"
The broad box-edges run to waste ;
Weeds creep where flowers should bloom ;
The axe has plied its cruel war,
And wrought its ravage wide and far ;—
What right had strangers' hands to mar
My home ? still, still *my* home ?

By the garden hedge, ere daylight dies,
I love in thought to lean,

And scan, with soft, tear-troubled eyes,

The old familiar scene.

The meadow-reaches green, the tall,

Dark grove of ancient trees ;

The little river, flashing bright

Its glimpses of meandering light ;—

The lowing kine, the swallows' flight,—

My heart doth yearn to these.

My heart doth yearn, despite the pain,

And gazing thus afar,

I see, in my dream, dawn once again

Youth's golden morning star.

I bare my forehead, and seem to feel

Its clouds of grief and care

Pass off and away, pass off and away,

As the vapours of night, at the break of day,

Pass off in the azure air.

I am young, I am young, I'm a merry boy!

What's gloom? what's grief? what's doubt?

What sorrow can darken or dim my joy ?

I laugh, I sing, I shout ;

But the sun goes down, and the stars steal forth,

And the ghostly mists arise,

And fast as the gloaming grows and grows,

The old care-cloud comes back to my brows,

And the tear to my troubled eyes.

Ah ! then I mount the winding stair,

With faltering step and slow ;

To the little room, so white and fair

In the dear old time, I go,—

To the room where my childish prayer was said,

Where slumber was sure to creep

O'er my drowsy lids, like a spell that 's thrown

By a loving hand from a world unknown—

Would God ! that *now* I could lay me down

And sleep as sound a sleep !

Would God ! I could drop away from this

Dark coil of strife and pain,

And enter my long-lost bower of bliss,
And be a child again !
To wake, to feel life's freshness lie,
Like dew on heart and brow,
Cool, calm !—Oh, flower of paradise !
Oh, Youth ! what blessing beyond price,
What boon from heaven art thou !

Oh, little room ! I used to lie
And watch, on nights like these,
The great red-visaged moon climb high
Above the ancient trees ;—
Climb high in the purple heaven and pour
Its floods of light below,
Paler and paler, pure and clear,
Till the lawns and grassy levels near
Lay white as fields of snow.

And at dawn, how pleasant to hear the brief,
Brisk swallow's chirp again ;

And the flapping and fluttering ivy leaf
 Tap, tap, on the window pane.
To rise with the sun, to wander forth,
 Free-hearted, blithe, and wild,
And be wooed by the morning's rosy kiss—
What rapture hath life more rare than this?—
Would God! I could enter my bower of bliss,
 And be again a child!

No more! no more! wild waves outspread
 My yearning footsteps hold,
And wastes ne'er tracked by mortal tread
 My bower of bliss infold;
But hearts, in pious pilgrimage,
 Flit fast o'er land and sea,
Like wandering birds, no skill can cage.—
Oh! a stranger hath my heritage,
 But he'll ne'er be rid of me!

A STREAM IN ARDEN.

I SING a stream in Arden. It might be
The self-same stream to which our Shakespeare
led

His melancholy Jacques, and eased his soul
With contemplation,—for the feathery boughs
Of immemorial trees droop o'er its course,
And shed their pensive shadows on its sward.

On moorland levels, 'mongst the purple heather
And golden gorse, my brooklet hath its birth.
It bubbles into life and song together,—
Crows, purls, and prattles to its reeds and ferns,
Then gambols down the dell, and frisks along,
Full of fair changes, and fine fantasies,
And pretty breaks of temper,—now a pool,

Clear, calm, a mirror for the clouds and stars,—
Now a sharp shallow, rattling o'er the rocks,—
Now fairy cascades, petulant with foam,—
And now a stream careering, strong and steady,
As with a foretaste of the open seas.

The pastures love my brook, and press it close
With velvet cincture, and the enamoured hills,
Though cloven to the chine to let it pass, and smit
As with a Parthian arrow, silver-barbed,
Toss their green tops with joy at sight of it,
And whisper a *non dolet* to the winds.

And I, the angler, love it well, and croon
Its praises in spontaneous undertones,
What time I pace its paths at summer dawn,
Ere yet the morning star hath left the sky,
And all the world is young ; or else, at eve,
My pastime o'er, when through its leafy roof
The sunset glory shimmers, and the trout

Dimple the violet water with their rings.
Oh ! then old dreams beset me, and I sink
Silent, in some green hiding-place, and hear
Dryad with Hamadryad hold discourse,
Naiad with Naiad, pagan dreams, with dreams
Of later superstitions interfused,
Kelpy and Kobold, till the rose and pearl
Fade, languish,—till a solemn hush descends
From starry heavens, and sudden, o'er the hills,
Rises, familiar, the full harvest moon.

UNDER THE PALM : A DREAM-PICTURE.

“My eyes make pictures when they are shut.”

—*Coleridge.*

SHE lay asleep in the shadow
Of the spreading palm, by the side
Of the noble river that rolls for ever
Its broad, abounding tide,
Through the heart of Egypt's sands, amid
Red tomb and temple and pyramid.

She slept in the palm-tree's shadow,
And over her shoulders fair,
Like the sunset's glow on Alpine snow,
Lay the web of her golden hair.
And ever, as fair and freely
Her bosom rose and fell,

From its white caress one wandering tress
 Stole forth, as if to tell
That a dearer sound than the river's,
 Or the wind's in the fanning tree,
Did ebb and flow, did come and go—
The pulse of that eager heart below,
 That throbb'd so tenderly.

For she lay asleep in the shadow
 Of the spreading palm, but afar
Her thought roved free in its fantasy
 Beneath a northern star.
And ever a happy smile would throw
 O'er lip and cheek its gleam ;
And ever she murmured, soft and low,
 As a cooing dove in her dream—
“ Oh ! joy for the rest and the haven won !
 Dear home ! I've sought thee long !
Oh ! the bonny burn, how it leaps in the sun !
 And the throstle, how sweet its song !”

In the sultry South, a rosy glow
Now flushed, now died away,
The red flamingo, tracking slow
His burning Nubian way.
The droning water-wheels gave out
Their sad and sighing sound ;
Anear was heard the Arab's shout ;
The camels grazed around.
But the golden Orient swayed no more
The sleeper's soul, for afar
Her thought roved free in its fantasy,
Beneath the same cold star ;
And ever the happy smile would shed
O'er lip and cheek its gleam,
And ever she murmured, soft and low,
As a cooing dove in her dream,—
“ Oh ! joy for the rest and the haven won !
Old home, I've sought thee long !
Oh ! the chime of the bells, how it sinks and
swells,

O'er the heathery hills and the windy fells,
And the throstle how sweet its song !”

And for me, that dream unbroken,
No jarring change doth know ;
By the strength of a spell no tongue can tell,
My soul doth keep it so.
From the swarm of shifting shadows,
From memories dark and fair,
I turn afar to my youth's bright star,
Up the vista of years, and there
I see her still in her beauty,
'Neath the spreading palm, by the side
Of the royal river that rolls for ever
Its broad, abounding tide,
Through the heart of Egypt's sands, amid
Red tomb and pillar and pyramid.

CLASPINGS.

LISTEN, darling ! how the winter blast
Shakes the wild-wood, rushing madly past ;
Clouds on clouds are gathering, night is nigh ;—
Draw the curtains, pile the yule-fire high.
Listen ! how the bare boughs wail and whine !—
Lay thy cheek, love, closer still to mine !

Now the storm bréaks—hark ! the iron rain
Patters, pelts against the window pane,
Fast and faster ;—hark ! the pine-tree's roar !
Ocean sweeping o'er a shingly shore—
Hark ! the rage, the ruin, and the glee—
Darling, clasp me close, as I clasp thee !

Bitter keen will be the night, when soon
Through the black cloud-battle breaks the moon ;
When the ice-winds o'er the uplands pass,
And the hoarfrost glitters on the grass.
Darling, for the cold that pains and parts,
Let there be no room between our hearts !

‘IN THE GOLDEN MORNING OF THE
WORLD.’

I N the golden morning of the world,
When creation’s freshness was unfurled,
Had earth truer, fonder hearts than now ?
One, at least, in this our day, I know
(Whisper soft, *ah ! benedicite !*)
Faithful-fond as any heart could be
In the golden morning of the world.

And were faces, in that orient time
Flushed, in sooth, with more resplendent prime,
More consummate loveliness than now ?
Nay, *one* maiden face, at least, I know
(Whisper soft, *ah ! benedicite !*)

Just as fair as any face could be
In the golden morning of the world.

But dark shadows reign, and storms are rife,
In the once serene clear heaven of life.

Oh! sweet angel, at the shining gate,
By God's mercy, keep *one* earthly fate,
One dear life—*ah! benedicite!*

Happy, calm, as any such could be
In the golden morning of the world!

“Elle est si douce, la Marguerite.”

—Chaucer.

I DO homage to the Rose, and low
To the Lily's grace, my head I bow ;
On meek Mignonette my praise I shower,
And greet fondly the fair Cuckoo flower ;
In my love the Violet hath its part,
But I clasp the daisy to my heart—
Clasp it close, the darling, and repeat—
Elle est si douce, la Marguerite !

Other blooms as fresh and fine may be—
Gentianella, pale Anemone,
Creamy Meadow-sweet, and scented Clover,
And wild Woodbine, that unshackled rover ;

In my love these flowers have all their part,

But I clasp the Daisy to my heart—

Clasp it close, the darling, and repeat—

Elle est si douce, la Marguerite !

TWO AVES.

A RECOLLECTION OF ANTWERP CATHEDRAL.

THE priest is praying in the choir,
But the sexton's daughter fair
Sings wild and free, in her winsome glee,
Five hundred feet in air.
Would you hear her song? Climb, bold and
strong,
The perilous, steep tower-stair.
Ave! Ave! ever below; but the lark's hymn up on
high—
And Ave! there, too, out of the cloud—Ave! under
the sky!

I climbed the stair, I braved the gloom,
That sweet voice drew me on—

Higher and higher, to the topmost spire,
Through the lofts of the carillon ;
Rude, you may guess, were the strain and
stress,
But at last the bourn was won ;
To a ledge set round with a parapet's bound,
Half-dazed I came anon,
Where that merry maid, no whit afraid,
Sat carolling in the sun.

Ave ! Ave ! ever below ; but the lark's hymn up on
high—

And Ave ! there, too, out of the cloud—Ave ! under
the sky !

She broke off in her song and blushed ;
Then soon her task began,
And, standing by my side, her glance
O'er all the landscape ran.
She showed me Mechlin's steeple tall
Against the horizon's sheen ;

Her rosy finger, traced afar

The Scheldt, through meadows green.

She showed me dykes and battle-mounds,

And towers of grim renown ;

She pointed all the churches out

In gray old Antwerp town ;

And when we had o'erlooked the roofs,

And quite o'errun the plain,

I sat beside her while she sang

Her winsome songs again.

Ave ! Ave ! ever below ; but the lark's hymn up on
high—

And Ave ! there, too, out of the cloud—Ave ! under
the sky !

I recked not what they were, those songs ;

But silvery-sweet and clear,

And fresh from the very heart they fell

On my enamoured ear.

'Twas like the music that in dreams

Pours rapture o'er the brain—

'Twas like my own lost childhood come

Back to me once again.

So listening, listening, stealthy time

Stole by all unaware ;

And somehow, ere I turned to go,

We sang together there—

We sang ! . . . oh ! dark the downward path

Of the perilous steep tower-stair !

Ave ! Ave ! ever below ; but the lark's hymn up on
high—

And Ave ! there, too, out of the cloud—Ave ! under
the sky !

Ay, the priest is praying in the choir,

With a good gruff voice prays he ;

The little bells ring and the choristers sing,

And our Lady of Calvary

Smiles, pure and pale, through her vapoury veil,
With a look that seems to declare,
“There’s a voice of glee that’s dearer to me
Aloft in the sunny air!”

Ay, the priest he prayeth in alb and pall,
And may all my sins be shriven!
To the tapers a-row, and the solemn show,
Due honour and praise be given!
But I breathed my prayer high up in air—
It was so much nearer heaven!

Ave! Ave! ever below; but the lark’s hymn up on
high—
And Ave! there, too, out of the cloud—Ave! under
the sky!

A DOLEFUL CONCEIT.

SOFTLY, sadly, in my soul
I do hear the death-bells toll,
Ever, ever,
For a gladness gone to wrack,
For a glory to come back,
Never, never !

O my youth, my youth, I strew
Wreaths of rosemary and rue
On the pillow,
Where thy sweet, dead face doth lie
Passively, but plaintively,
'Neath Time's willow !

O shut eyes; what golden glowings,
What sun-bursts, what overflowings
Of fresh beauty
Dowered you in the days of yore !
Eyes now fixed on death's pale shore
For sole duty.

Ah! we live when Youth is dead—
Light our laugh, and strong our tread ;—
On our faces
Health doth pour its ruddy glow,
And a mocking joy bestow
Its false graces.

Nay, we live *not*—we but dream—
Ghostly shades adown Time's stream,
Lo! we wander,
Aping Life, and striving aye
To live back Youth's sunny day,
Vanished yonder.

And full oft we wake, we wake,
With a terrible heartache,
 That saith clearly,
Life was Youth, and Youth is dead,
And all joys we clutch instead
 Are shows merely.

Then for gladness gone to wrack,
For that glory to come back
 Never, never,
Softly, sadly in our soul
We do hear the death-bells toll
 Ever, ever!

‘O WIND OF THE MOUNTAIN!’

O WIND of the Mountain, Wind of the Mountain, hear!

I have a prayer to whisper in thine ear:—

Hush, pine-tree, hush! Be silent, sycamore!

Cease thy wild waving, ash-tree, old and hoar!

Flow softly, stream! My voice is faint with fear—

O Wind of the Mountain, Wind of the Mountain,
hear!

In the dull city, by the lowland shore,

Pale grows the cheek, so rosy-fresh of yore.

Woe for the child—the fair blithe-hearted child—

Once thy glad playmate on the breezy wild!

Hush, pine-tree, hush!—my voice is faint with fear—
O Wind of the Mountain, Wind of the Mountain,
hear!

Pale grows the cheek, and dim the sunny eyes,
And the voice falters, and the laughter dies.
Woe for the child! She pines, on that sad shore,
For the free hills and happy skies of yore.
Hush, river, hush!—my voice is faint with fear—
O Wind of the Mountain, Wind of the Mountain,
hear!

O Wind of the Mountain, thou art swift and strong—
Follow, for love's sake, though the way be long.
Follow, oh! follow, over down and dale,
To the far city in the lowland vale.
Hush, pine-tree, hush!—my voice is faint with fear—
O Wind of the Mountain, Wind of the Mountain,
hear!

Kiss the dear lips, and bid the laughters rise—
Flush the wan cheek, and brighten the dim eyes ;
Sing songs of home, and soon, from grief and pain,
Win back thy playmate, blessèd Wind, again !
Win back my darling—while away my fear—
O Wind of the Mountain, Wind of the Mountain,
hear !

SIR HILDEBRAND.

IMITATED FROM UHLAND.

A LAY of the knight, Sir Hildebrand !
A caitiff knight was he,
Burgher and pilgrim and shaven priest
Grew pale his crest to see.
He lurked, one eve, in a ruined church,
But at midnight rode away,
For a goodly train would cross the plain,
’Twas said, at dawn of day.

But soon he reined his steed—“ Return,
My trusty squire ! ” he cries—
“ On the coffin lid, in the ruined church,
My glove, forgotten lies—

Go, fetch it thence !—ride fast, ride fast !”—

And fast the henchman rode,
And back again, as fast and fain,
Came thundering up the road.

“ Perdition seize thy glove ! for lo !

In weird and woeful plight,
A ghost sits on the coffin lid,—
My hair’s on end with fright—
He clutches the glove in his bony claw,
He strokes it silently,
And his eyes are like coals . . . God keep our souls,
And all good saints !”—quoth he.

A bold knight was Sir Hildebrand—

He bade his henchman bide,
Then back to the ruined church he rode
And pushed the portal wide,
And there, in the darkness, hand to hand,
With the horrid fiend he strove,

And the knight was conqueror in the fight,
And the fiend gave back the glove !

But after, with dark smile, he spoke—

“ If that glove I may not wear,
As mine—Oh ! lend me the twain, I pray,
If but for one brief year ! ”

“ Amen ! ” said the knight—“ That boon be thine,—
And now I shall know, I trust,
How the devil keeps tryst ! ”—On each ghostly wrist,
The fiend a gauntlet thrust.

“ Ha, ha ! ”—laughed the knight, Sir Hildebrand—

“ You ’ll scarcely stretch the leather,
Though you slip into one glove, pardie !
Both bony hands together ! ”
And away he rode o’er the windy hills,
Till the cock crowed loud and clear,
And he heard the tread of man and steed,
On the rocky highway near.

His keen eye flashed—a train of knights,
In dark war-harness clad,
Like a thunder-cloud, swept o'er the plain,
And in their rear was led
A coal-black steed, with fiery eyes,
And housings, dark and drear
As a funeral pall, whose fringes fall
Around a knightly bier.

Then outspake bold Sir Hildebrand—
“Now tell me, page,”—he cried—
“What knights are these and wherefore thus
Across the plain they ride ;—
And pr'ythee, whose dark steed is this? . . .”
The page smiled, smooth and bland—
“To my master's friend, this steed doth wend,
His name, *Sir Hildebrand!*

Sir Hildebrand! the rōbber chief,
A name of note!” quoth he—

“ But stark and dead, ere the year be fled,

That famous knight will be.

On this coal-black steed his ghost will ride.”—

Loud laughed the page so gay—

“ Oh ! he’s fierce and fell, and he ’ll bear him well ! ”—

And so he strode away.

Thrice groaned the bold Sir Hildebrand—

He crossed himself with dread,

Then to his trusty squire he turned,

And gloomily he said—

“ In my path a mortal peril lies—

Now take my war-steed good—

Take helm and shield, and sword, and wield

Its blade henceforth, for God ! ”

He sprang to earth, he doffed his helm,

His face was wild and wan ;—

Over the windy hills he went,

A miserable man.

At St Bruno's convent gate he knocked,—
 “ Lord Abbot,” he said, “ my sin
Is heavy to bear, I pine to share
 Sweet peace, these walls within !

“ But all unfit for monkish stole
 Were my fallen state—confer
Some lowlier charge, and let me be
 Your humble servitor,
Till penance and pain have shrived my soul
 And washed it white and free.”
The Abbot espied his spurs and cried—
 “ Our steeds your charge shall be.

“ For a trooper stout and tried art thou,
 Sir knave, and it may be
Hast had thy share in many a fray,
 For thou art bold of blee ;
But shrive thy soul—to penance meet
 And pious prayer incline,

Go, tell thy beads, train well our steeds,
And peace may yet be thine.”—

* * * * *

“ One year,” said the fiend ; and day for day,
When the year was out, appeared
The Abbot, and led a war-horse wild,
That leaped and plunged and reared ;
And when Sir Hildebrand essayed
His savage strength to sway,
'Neath his hoofs of might he crushed the knight,
And neighed and fled away.

In his shroud lay bold Sir Hildebrand,
And at dead of night there came
That same dark page and sable steed,
With the hot, fierce eyes of flame.
Bitted and bridled the courser stood,
An ominous thing, I trow,—
Two gauntlets hung and clashed and clung,
Beside his saddle-bow.

From his bier rose dead Sir Hildebrand,—
 A weird and woeful sight—
He leaped on the steed—his fluttering shroud
 Glared in the ghastly light ;
He took the gloves, he snatched the rein,—
 One fierce triumphant neigh,
And off! through the woods and wilds and floods,
 They rushed, away, away !

MINE!

I SAT on a rock, one day,
High over the sea,
And saw a brave ship sail away,
With a merry company.
Wild raged the storm—above and under
Bellowed the waves and boomed the thunder—
Wilder and wilder—suddenly,
Down went that brave ship in the sea!

Down with a headlong reel!—and of all
Her crew, a single mariner only,
Caught in the eddy's pitiless thrall,
Was left, round-whirling, weird and lonely,
While the Sea above him rose and clomb
In turbulent billows, ridged with foam,

And hoarse its shout swept over the brine,
“ This mortal is mine, is mine ! ”

But a Wind to landward came—
A mountain Wind, a wrestler with great pines,
Cleaver of chasms, sharp searcher of ravines,
Rapid as light, and fiery-fierce as flame.

This Wind yelled from afar,
With tyrannous voice, resounding o'er the war
Of waves and thunders, through the rifted air,
“ Forbear ! O Sea, forbear !
He is mine ! he is mine ! ”

Whereat the astonished Sea, in wrath condign,
Did mock the Wind, and soaring higher and higher,
Tossed up its prey, a drenched and ghastly heap,
Spattered with slime, to the clouds, then plunged it
deep

Again, in gulfs as deadly as its ire,

And after, roared anew athwart the brine,
“ This mortal is *mine*, is *mine* !”

Down through the rifted air !

Down, down !

Came the mountain Wind, with savage wings unfurled,

Swift as a thunderbolt to scathe a world,

And tiger-like, once driven from its lair,

It flew at the throat of its foe, and wrenched and tare

Great wounds and fissures in the Titan waves,

Then hurled them headlong to their ocean caves,

And scattered on the waste their tangled foamy hair !

But they rose, they rose again,

Livid, and dazed, and blue, and snatched amain,

Half blindly, at their prey : and then in walls

Of rolling waters, rushed, at intervals,

Full-fronted on the foe,

Who, sharp retreating, wheeled, as if for flight,
Then, swooping on their rear, renewed the fight ;
Till finally the Sea, o'ertasked, did grow
Weary and faint, from deepest depths up-sending
Sobs and hoarse groans, despairing and heartrending,
Thereat, the Wind shrieked "Victory!" and bore,
With driving pinion, fleetly to the shore,
That ghastly mariner. On either hand
The waves pursued, but broke, with feeble shocks,
And fruitless, on the reef of shoreward rocks.
"Victory, ho! victory!" howled the Wind again,
A sullen murmur moaned from out the main,
And...a white heap lay huddled on the strand.

A white heap and a ghostly Shape beside,
At sight of whom the Wind fled far away,
And the Sea caught back its advancing tide.
This Shape bent over where the mariner lay,
And glared into his face ; then, quietly,
" *Mine*, after all, mine evermore !" quoth he.

And the air curdled at his laugh of glee,
And all the solemn sky paled visibly.

Then ached mine heart with anguish, till I fell
Into a trance, and saw the storm-clouds swell
And part, back-rolling, and the vaulted blue
Open to let an inner glory through.

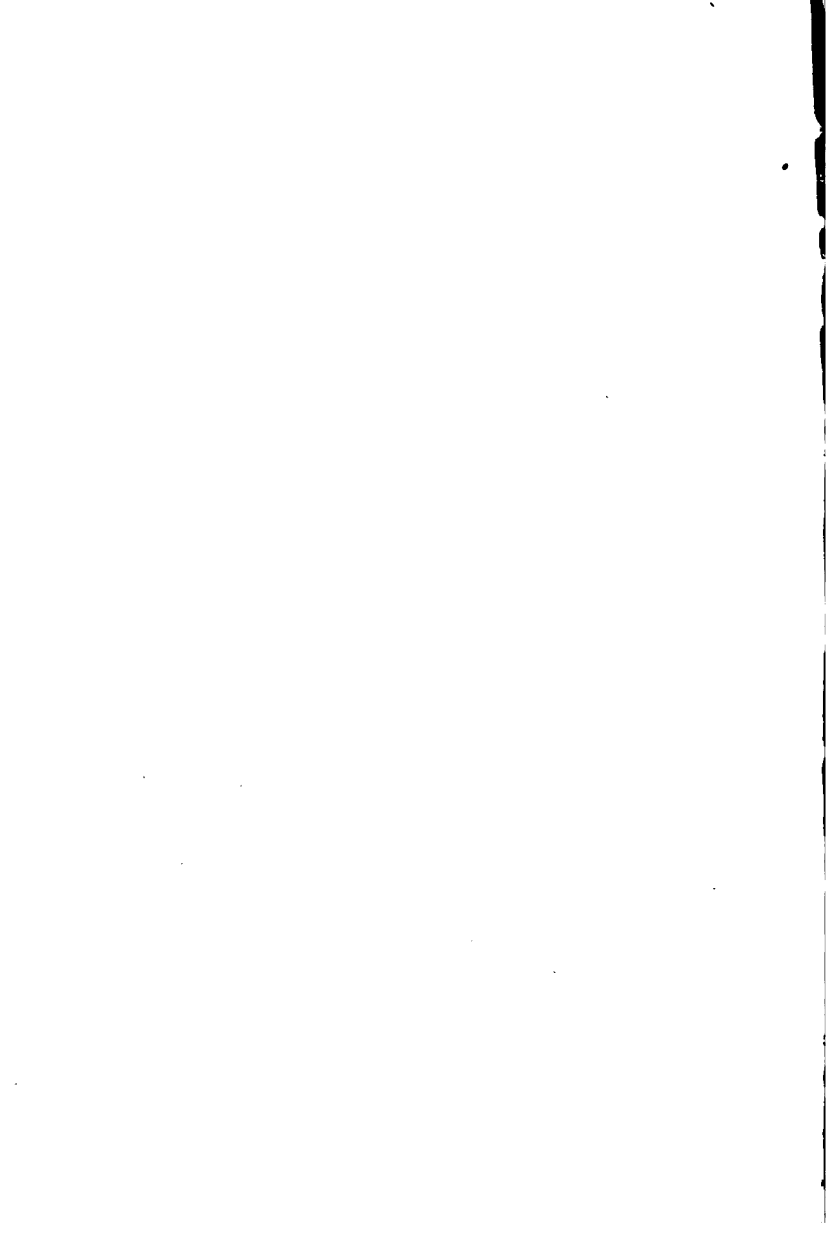
And, 'mid the glory, lo! a Voice did seem
To hover, like a heaven-song in a dream.—

“THIS SOUL IS MINE!” it said, “MINE!” Where-
upon

A thousand silver-footed echoes run,
To catch the sound up; but in vain, in vain!
Too awfully sweet, too solemn-still the strain;
And, in the after-hush, I heard afar,
Through that blue gateway, over sun and star,
A chiming of grand voices, that, methought,
Did hail that grander Voice, in anthems fraught
With an adoring passion. Presently,
The glory faded, clouds on clouds anew,

Closed up the gateway in the vaulted blue,
And hushed the anthems. I awoke : the sea
Was smooth as glass, the wind sunk placidly
To sleep ; the ghostly Shape had fled the place,
And a smile glorified the dead man's face

A GARLAND OF ANGLING
RHYMES.



A GARLAND OF ANGLING
RHYMES.



A LAY OF THE LEA.

I 'M an old man now,
Stiff limb and frosty pow,
But stooping o'er my flickering fire, in the winter
weather,
I behold a vision
Of a time elysian,
And I cast my crutch away, and I snap my tether !

Up 'i the early morning,
Sleepy pleasures scorning,

Rod in hand and creel on back, I'm away, away !

Not a care to vex me,

Nor a fear perplex me,

Blithe as any bird that pipes in the merry May.

Oh, the Enfield meadows,

Dappled with soft shadows !

Oh, the leafy Enfield lanes, odorous of May blossom !

Oh, the lapsing river,

Lea, beloved for ever,

With the rosy morning light mirrored on its bosom !

Out come reel and tackle—

Out come midge and hackle—

Length of gut, like gossamer, on the south wind
streaming—

Brace of palmers fine,

As ever decked a line,

Dubbed with herl and ribbed with gold, in the sun
light gleaming.

Bobbing 'neath the bushes,
Crouched among the rushes,
On the rights of crown and state, I'm, alas! en-
croaching ;
What of that? I know
My creel will soon o'erflow,
If a certain Cerberus* do not spoil my poaching.

As I throw my flies,
Fish on fish doth rise,

* Does any one of my readers happen to remember the Cerberus in question, Tim Bates, the guardian of the crown waters at Waltham Abbey, some five-and-twenty years ago? The omnipresent, the incorruptible Tim Bates, whom no expostulation could move, no entreaty melt, and who was even impervious to half-crowns? This unwinking worthy (one of the *bêtes noires* of my angling boyhood) spoiled me many a day's sport by his untimely apparition; and I confess to a feeling of heathenish satisfaction on hearing of the Lea's ingratitude, and how—unlike Tiber in the case of Horatius—it did *not* bear up Tim Bates's chin, when he slipped into its depths, with mortal result, one foggy night or morning.

Chatto mentions him in his "Angler's Souvenir," and celebrates his "Lynx Eyes."

Roach and dace by dozens, on the bank they
flounder ;

Presently a splash,

And a furious dash,—

Lo ! a logger-headed chub, and a fat two-pounder !

Shade of Izaak, say,

Did you not one day

Fish for logger-headed chub by this very weir ?

'Neath these very trees,

Down these sedgy leas,—

Where's the nightingale that ought to be singing
here ?

Now, in noontide heat,

Here I take my seat ;

Izaak's book beguiles the time—of Izaak's book I say,

Never dearer page

Gladdened youth or age,

Never sweeter soul than his blessed the merry May.

For the while I read,
'Tis as if indeed
Peace and joy and gentle thoughts from each line
were welling ;
As if earth and sky
Took a tenderer dye,
And as if a score of larks in my heart were trilling.

Ne'er should angler stroll
Ledger, dap, or troll,
Without Izaak in his pouch, on the banks of Lea ;—
Ne'er, with worm or fly,
Trap the finny fry,
Without loving thoughts of him, and *Benedicite* !

So to sport again,
With my palmers twain—
There's a lovely speckled trout—where's its peer, I
wonder ?

There's a dace, you ne'er
Saw finer, I declare—
There's—by all that's cruel, yes—there's my CER-
BERUS yonder!

Up go rod and tackle,
Up go midge and hackle,
Hurry-scurry, down the path, fast my foe approaches;—
Wheel the line in steady!
Now all's right and ready:—
Izaak makes a sudden plunge 'mongst the bleak and
roaches.

Hollo, hollo, hollo!
Will he dare to follow?
Over dykes, with flying leaps—over gates and hedges!
Hollo, hollo, hollo!
Will he dare to follow?
No! I look behind and see nought but stream and
sedges.

Oh, the pleasant roaming
Homeward through the gloaming !
Oh, the heavy creel, alack ! Oh, the joyful greeting !
Oh, the jokes and laughter,
And the sound sleep after,
And the happy, happy dreams, all the sport repeating !

I'm an old man now,
Stiff limb and frosty pow,
But stooping o'er my flickering fire, in the winter
weather,
Oft I see this vision
Of a time elysian,
And I cast my crutch away, and escape my tether !

HEY FOR COQUET!

A WA' frae the smoke an' the smother !
Awa' frae the crush o' the thrang !
Awa' frae the labour an' pother,
That hae fettered our freedom sae lang !
For the May's i' fu' bloóm i' the hedges,
An' the laverock's aloft i' the blue,
An' the south-wind sings low i' the sedges,
By haughs that are silvery wi' dew.
Up angler, off wi' each shackle !
Up gad an' gaff, an' awa' !
Cry—hurrah ! for the canny red "hackle,
The hackle that tackled them a' !"

Off, off to the bonnie brown Norland !—
It haunts me for aye i' my dreams ;—

To torrent, an' mountain and muirland,
An' to Coquet, the queen o' the streams !
To Coquet, the beautifu' river,
Beloved by the bards that sae lang
Upheld her the foremost for ever,
An' hallowed her banks wi' their sang !
Up angler ! off wi' each shackle, &c.

O Sharperton streams, we are comin' !
O Halystane, greet us wi' glee !
O Rothbury, deep i' the gloamin',
We 'll bring our first creelfu' to thee !
An' Alwinton, Harbottle, Hepple,—
If the saumon, the glorious, the strang,
Still lurk i' your current's quick ripple,
We 'll measure their inches ere lang !
Up angler ! off wi' each shackle, &c.

From Blindburn, 'midst crag an' hill-hollow,
To Warkworth, anear the salt main,

Each turn o' fair Coquet we'll follow,
Each haunt o' our childhood regain.
At Thropton, we winna dissemble
Fu' hearts, nor at Harbottle-hold,
An' at Weeldon, wi' voices a-tremble,
We'll pledge THE GREAT FISHERS O' AULD !
Up angler ! off wi' each shackle, &c.

We'll see if the Sharperton lassies
Are winsome as in our young days,—
If they'll rin to the ringin' o' glasses,
Or the lilt o' the auld merry lays.
Oh ! we'll shake off the years wi' our laughter,
We'll wash out our wrinkles wi' dew,
An', reckless o' what may come after,
We'll revel in boyhood anew.
Up angler ! off wi' each shackle, &c.

Then back to the smoke an' the smother ;
The uproar an' crush o' the thrang ;

An' back to the labour and pother—
But happy an' hearty an' strang ;
Wi' a braw light o' mountain and muirland,
Out flashing frae forehead an' e'e,
Wi' a blessing flung back to the Norland,
An' a thousand, dear Coquet, to thee,
As again we resume the old shackle,
Our gad an' our gaff stowed awa'—
An'—good-bye to the canny “red hackle,
The hackle that tackled them a'!”

FAREWELL TO COQUET !

THE night draws nigh, across the sky
Creep shadows of the gloaming ;—
But drearier still and deathly chill,
I feel *my* dark hour coming.
Oh ! lift me in thine arms, stout son,
And thou, my loving daughter,
Stand back a while,—my farewell smile
Must light on Coquet's water.

Stand back—throw wide the pane—thank God !
These eyes behold in dying,
With lingering strain, so fond and fain,
The scene before them lying.
The south-wind moans—I know its tones—
And see, O loving daughter,

How day's last beam flushes the stream
And gilds the glittering water !

Now place my gad beside my hand—
I live in days gone by ;—
I climb the steeps, I wade the deeps,
I throw the cunning fly.
Fast whirls my reel—full grows my creel—
O son ! O loving daughter !
In maddest dream, was ever stream
Could vie with Coquet's water !

Hark ! 'twas a salmon's splash,—aha !
He's hooked—my rod bends double ;—
A royal fish !—the pool afar
Foams round his stormy trouble.
He yields, he dies—a noble prize !
O son ! O loving daughter !
In maddest dream, was ever stream
Could vie with Coquet's water ?

In the blessèd land of Heaven, they say,
Are rivers fair beholden,
That by God's throne flow murmuring on,
O'er opal sands and golden.
My lot may be those streams to see,
But oh, dear son and daughter!
Shall I never cast a backward glance
To Coquet's bonny water?

Now take my gad, and lay me down,
Stout son—'tis gone for ever!
My life ebbs fast, I've looked my last
On that belovèd river.
Thank God! my latest word shall be,—
O faithful son and daughter!—
For happy times, and loving bairns,
And for *Coquet's bonny water!*

AN ANGLER'S DREAM UNDER
ROLANDSECK.

FAIR is the Rhine, but not for angler's gain ;
All day I whipped its stream, and whipped in
vain ;

With creel still empty when the twilight gleamed,
I sat me on a rock, and drowsed and dreamed,

* * * * *

O Rolandseck ! O Rolandseck !

That sight I saw in Rolandseck !

The autumn moon shone through the wreck

Of scattered clouds, and smiling down,

Lit up the hoary mountain's crown,

And the sleeping forests sere and brown ;

Serene the night, and fair the view,

But white and scared the moonbeams grew,
When they peered the castle casement through,
And saw that sight in Rolandseck !

“ O knight, Sir Roland, do the dead
Love still, with that true love of yore ?
O knight, Sir Roland, have the dead
No rest, no rest for evermore ?”

Nought spake he, statue-like and still,
By the shattered window's mossy sill,
His white, dead face looked weirdly forth,
As erst, on cloistered Nonnenwerth.

Nought spake he, but away, away
Flew the owl, and screamed through the ruins gray,
“ No rest in sheet or shroud have they—
No rest have the dead till the Judgment-day !”

* * * * *

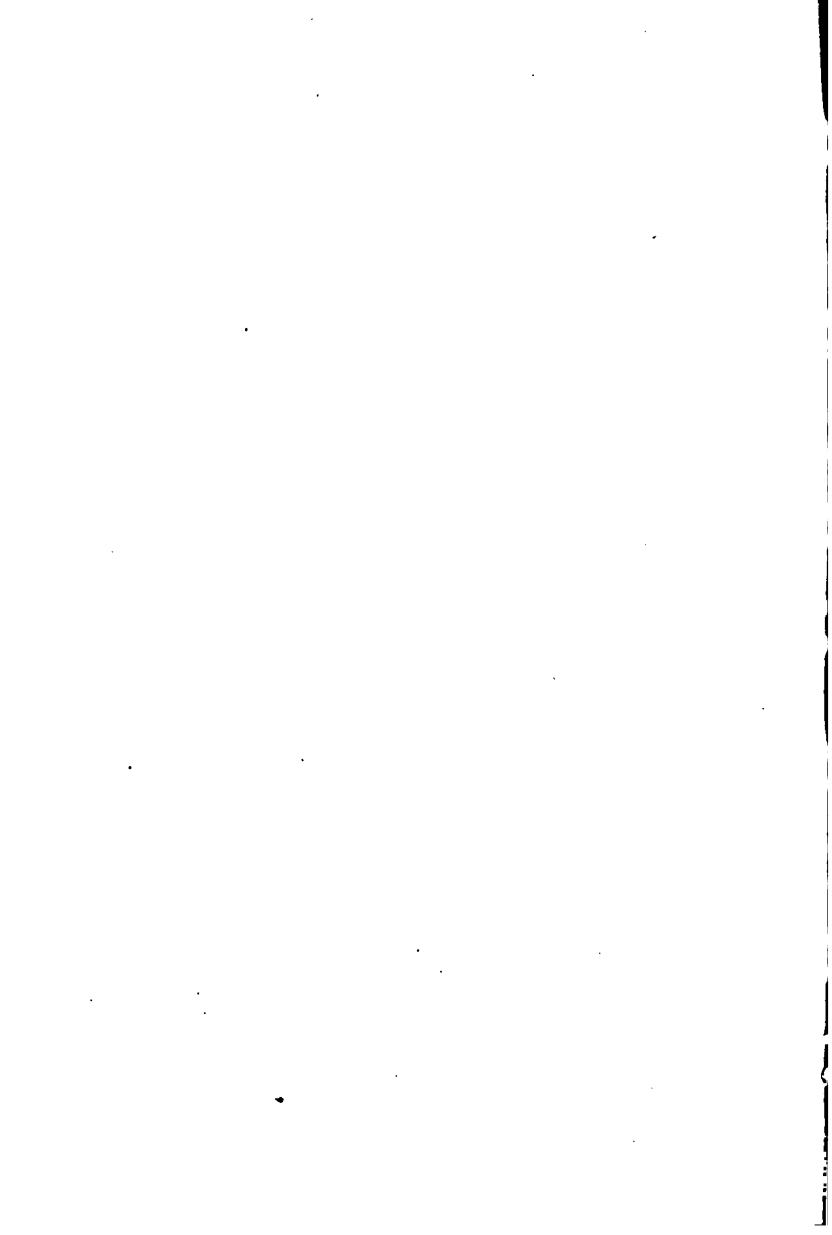
Through the chasms of the cloven hills for ever,
Like a mighty shaft from a Titan quiver,
Sweepeth the broad, abounding river ;
And the bargeman singeth cheerily,
As swift and smooth his bark skims by,
'Neath the willowy banks of Nonnenwerth.
He singeth loud, no thought hath he,
But of hearth and home and household glee,—
But his daughter shrieketh suddenly,
For through drowsy eyelids peering forth,
She seeth, she seeth the convent wall
Glare white where the ghastly moon-rays fall ;
And lo ! at the topmost lattice tall,
A shape the grave's gaunt cerements deck,
And a wan, dead face, that gazeth aye
O'er the gleaming water, far away,
To the heights of ruined Rolandseck !

“ Do the dead keep tryst ? ”—the maiden said,

As she crossed herself, with a shuddering dread—
“ Oh ! rest—God give ye rest, ye dead ! ”

“ Rest ! ”—screamed the owl, as away, away
He flew through the convent cloisters gray—
“ *No* rest, in sheet or shroud have they—
No rest have the dead till the Judgment-day ! ”

SONNETS.



SONNETS.



MEMORY.

A WEARY task is Memory's ; oft she stops,
Loitering, where poppies grow, and lays her
down,

And nods in a half-slumber, and so drops
The key of her old archives. Then ye frown,
And chafe and chide and seek her here and there,
Through ancient valleys and deserted ways,
Obscurely, and not finding her, declare
Poor Memory faithless—records of past days
Forgotten, lost. . . . Not so ! oh ! verily
Not so ! She sleeps, 'tis true, and drops the key,
But keeps the records. When God bids her plead,
At judgment, she will give her trust up, such
As she received it, *all* . . . alas ! how much,
Ye will wish vainly had been lost indeed !

THE VOW-BOOK.

YOUTH registers its vows on a white page,
In a choice tome, and marks each with a flower,
Pansy or violet, as may suit the hour,
Or love, or life-long friendship be the gage.
Time turns those white leaves over with a hand
That yellows every one, and soon the vows
Grow fewer, colder . . . prudent manhood throws
The book by, wholly. Then it takes its stand
With other books outworn, and the dust falls
And the worm gnaws. At last, Age with a frown,
Or cynic sneer, as it may chance, recalls
Old dreams—once more the tome is lifted down . . .
Hark! how his cracked voice chuckles, as he eyes
Youth's broken vows and withered sanctities!

TO A MOUNTAIN STREAM.

O LITTLE stream, that leapest like a child
Over the pebbles, cease thy merry song!—
Thou hast been leaping, singing, all day long,
Be still a moment here, where yonder wild,
Blithe mates, the sunbeams, cannot come, so deep
A shade the sycamores all round thee keep.
O mountain stream, I wonder and would know,
What secret can be thine, what subtle spell,
To make thee bright and young, and keep thee so !
For centuries thou hast flowed, yet who could tell
Thine age, by gazing on thy dimpled face ?
While mine, that was young, too, but yesterday,
Look, little stream, look steadily and say,
What doth it mirror now but Time's disgrace !

TO ———.

I.

DO you remember how we used to pace
Under the lindens, by the garden wall?
It was a homely, but secluded place,
Safe-sheltered from the prying gaze of all.
Deep, in the azure distance, loomed the tall,
Grand, heathery hills, and one bluff headland nigh
Rose, ruin-crowned, against the golden sky. . .
How lovingly around you seemed to fall
Those linden shadows—when you laid aside
Your hat, in the hot noon, and let the air
Kiss cheek and forehead, while I fetched you rare
Red-coated peaches, or the purple pride
Of grapes, still glowing with the autumn sun. . .
And we sipped other fruit, too, little one;

II.

LOVE grew in those calm shadows, silently ;—
It could not choose but grow, thou wert so dear,
The darling of all hearts, for, far and near,
All loved thee, and it was my joy to see
Rough peasant faces wrinkle into glee,
When thy fresh, happy face and smile of cheer
Met theirs, and, honey-sweet upon their ear,
Fell thy low-whispered words of sympathy.
All loved thee ;—I, a dweller in the towns,
Used to coarse faces, common souls, and worn
And fretted with inclement fortune's frown,
How could I chose but own thee sweetest, best,
And give my poor, sad heart up like the rest ?

III.

To cheer earth's wintry heart, God gives the spring—
To mine, *thou* camest, like a pitying day
Of tender April, leafy-green and gay,
Full of sweet scents and happy blossoming.
What word was on thy lips? . . . "Wait, wait and
bring
Sweet patience to thine aid. I cannot see
Or fathom my heart's hidden mystery,
But God will make it clear—be patient, cling
To hope . . . as I do." Then a gentle hand
Was laid on my hot palm, and I arose,
And saw the golden harvest crown the land,
And heard a thousand birds, in orchard close
And stubble field, pipe loud, and, faint and far,
The lark's sweet "Ave!" 'neath the evening star.

THE COMIC ARTIST.

I.

“**A** WITTY picture ! what a merry soul
He must have been, that made it !” Think
ye so ?

With your permission, Sirs, I will unroll
One chapter in his history. You shall know
Its pregnant meanings. This young artist had
A trick of painting things the world was glad
To laugh at, but not buy. The crowd would stand
And eye them—many a lusty idler shaking
His fat sides with a mirth past all mistaking ;—
And while they laughed, the artist’s busy hand
Still plied its craft. A garret was the scene,
His boon companions, twain—one, with gaunt mien,
Famine, sat next his heart, devoured his breath ;
The other, crouching on the threshold, DEATH.

II.

A MERRY soul ! At last the skeleton hand
Stopped, like the index of a clock, that turns
With time, no more. Famine, that ever yearns
For a fresh prey, passed out. Death took his stand
Beside him, then. A faint voice gasped, "Thank
God !"

His human voice, in welcome, when the rod
Of Heaven's exceeding mercy laid him low.
And all the while, round the shop-windows, loud
Rang out the laughter of the idle crowd,
At his gay fancies ! . . . Oh ! if ye could know,
Could, with your own eyes, see and inly prove,
How half the blossoming things Art's garden bears,
Strike their roots deep in agony and tears,
We should have fewer laughters . . . but more love.

TO A SONNETEERING CRITIC.

FROM UHLAND.

THOU, who so lately from thy critic's chair,
Didst roughly handle us poor sonneteers,
O'erwhelming us with cruel jests and jeers,
And maledictions, chartered with despair :—
Thou spotless ermine of the classic school,
What whim was thine to soil thy spotless coat,
And in a sonnet, weak as fledgling's note,
Puff out thy sighs, like any love-sick fool ?
Hast thou forgotten thine own solemn warning ?
And all good Master Voss, that quaint old preacher,
Spake, half in joke and half in bitter scorning ?
O critic ! thou dost mind me of the teacher,
Who flogged his pupil once for orchard stripping,
And . . . ate the apples, while he gave the whipping.

TO ———.

THE snow lies deep on all the frozen hills ;—
Dead Nature slumbers in her solemn shroud,
A dead smile on her face ; the winds wail loud
Above her, and the little leaping rills,
Wandering no longer, “at their own sweet wills,”
Stop, horror-struck, their voices gone, their light
Quick hearts chilled into torpor . . . dismal sight !
Let us turn from it ere its shadow fills
Our souls with sadness. Let me gaze, instead,
Into the depths of thy calm, loving eyes,
And see the gorgeous purple nights arise,
We loved so well of yore—Oh ! dear, fond head,
Nestle close, closer !—happy eyes, o’erflow,
With the great moonlights of the long-ago.

LOVE AND CHANGE.

I.

LOVE stood before me in my youth's fresh
prime—

“The hill is steep,” he said, “the way is long,
Be Love thy guide ! Love's heart is stanch and strong,
His truth triumphant over Death and Time.”

Oh ! very fair was Love, and sweeter far
His voice than any bird's ; my soul did seem
Touched by an angel in a silver dream,
Sent down from regions of the morning star.

I turned to follow, but austere and strange,
Another voice cried, “Pause !” Whereat a wail
Broke from me. Lo ! sweet Love waxed wan and pale,
And dark, behind him, loured the shadow, Change.
That sterner voice was Truth's, for now I know
Change followeth Love, wherever he doth go.

II.

“ POOR child!”— Truth murmured — “ thou dost
shrink to see

Love thus companioned; on thine ear doth ring
The grand ‘ for ever ! ’ that the seraphs sing
In the heavens only. Love, that litany
Hath dreamed—nor questioneth, nor doubteth he,
But chanteth loud and strong, yet pauseth oft,
And ceaseth soon. Poor child! the clouds
aloft

Are just as stable—yet some grace must be
Hid in that sorrow : with meek hands uplift
The shroud and search :—behold, how, one by one,
Life’s feeble loves die out, like flowers, in the drift
Of the first snow—grief lingers, but anon,
By faith transfigured, sets the whole heart free
To clasp a love whose term’s eternity. ”

III.

I COULD not lift that pall—my heart was full,
Mine eyes o'erflowed ; life's glory seemed to grow
A shadowy semblance and a mocking show ;
Dull grew the earth, the sky all leaden dull.
O Love ! I cried—O Love, the beautiful !
O Love, the joy of the heart, the light of the eyes !
Thou hast undone me with thy witcheries,
O fair, false Love !—A pitiless hand doth pull
Thy mask off, and behold, decay hath shed
Dust on thy lips and ashes on thy head !
O Death, unbar the door, my soul doth pine
To enter in—and Thou, the one, divine,
True Love, uplift me, where the sweet heavens ring
With that “ for ever ! ” which the seraphs sing.

IV.

THE river flowed in music to the sea ;
The summer wind its wild sweet tune began ;
The little field-mice in the furrows ran ;
From out the flower-bells buzzed the wandering bee.
A calm sank on my soul. This misery
Of loss and change, I said, all life doth bear,
Nor riseth in revolt, nor in despair
Doth languish. God is very strong, and we,
In rash rebellion, but as sapling trees,
That front the lightning ; I will lift that pall,
And bow me, where the deathly shade doth fall,
And scan, with patient heart, those mysteries,
If haply I may find—oh, dear and strange !
God's love enfolded in His bitter change.

THE SMALL POETS.

WHEN you can count the sea-sand, you shall
brave

A sterner task ; some long, fine summer day,
You shall make up the total—no child's play—
Of the small poets. Certes, you will have
Sore eyes, when twilight comes, and finds you yet
Far from your goal. Oh for a wizard's sleight—
Your cry will be—to turn this swarm of mites,
Into one mighty !—which, if you could get,
Indeed, a poet, from your universe
Of motes and midges, would be wise and well ;
But ah ! it needs small wisdom to foretell,
That did you, verily, such spells rehearse,
No better fruit could crown your sorceries
Than a small poet, of a monstrous size.

NATURE.

A COMELY face hath Nature, but no heart.
None!—Are you sad? she smiles. Is your
grief past
And gladness come? her skies are overcast.
In your chameleon moods she hath no part.
Praise her—your warmest words will ne'er impart
A flush the more to her full loveliness;—
Flout her, and she will offer you, no less,
Flowers, fruitage, all the effluence of her art.
Die, she will send her blithest birds to sing
Outside your window, and upon your brow
Shed showers of sunbeams, in rich overflow;
Go down into your grave—no cloud will fling
Its shade, in sorrow that your tale is told;—
She is a comely mother, but stone-cold.

WRITTEN ON THE FLY-LEAF OF A BOOK
OF BRITISH BALLADS.

LARGE-LEAVED and royal-hued the blooms
that grow

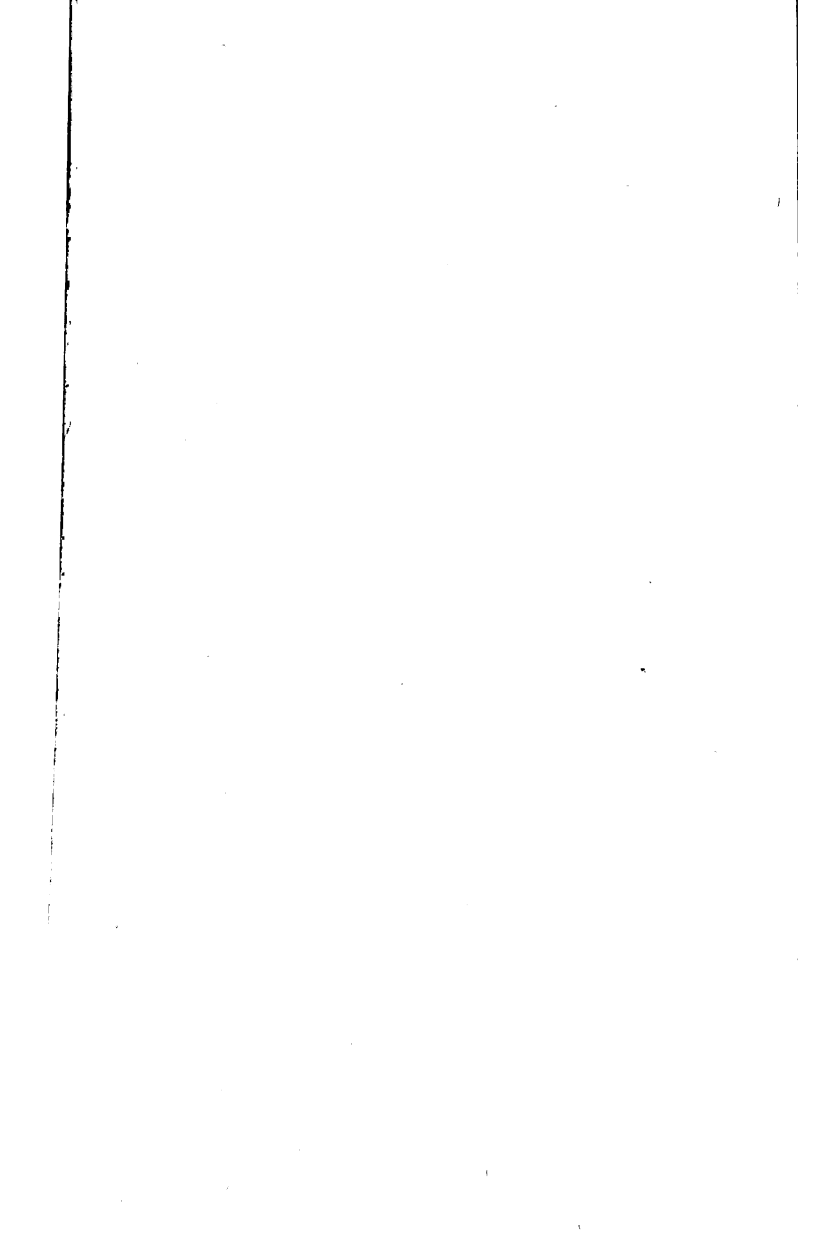
In the gay gardens of the modern muse.
Simpler the ancient flowers, but pearly with dews
So passing pure, that all the summer glow
Of immemorial years hath failed to throw
A paleness on their petals, or destroy
Their native wild-brier scents, too fresh to cloy.
When we wax weary of the flaunting show
Of pleasance and parterre, the tulip race
And dahlia brood, with broad, unblushing face,
And seek these early blossoms, 'tis like straying,
In childish mood, from lawns and bowers away,
Through garden-gate, at dewy dawn of day,
Into the pastoral meads, to go a-Maying.

THE END.

THE world grows old, grows old.—Listen ! dost
hear

A faint sigh floating on the summer wind ?
As of a weary heart, that looks behind
With bitterness, and on before with fear.
Listen again ! a shudder seems to pass
Through the black forests and the bending grass ;
The river sobs against the reeds, and now,
If you view fixedly the solemn sky,
Each planet, left on Night's discoloured brow,
Shines pale, and throbs and pulsates feverishly.
Is the hour near, the End ? O Time, beware !
Methinks I see, through yon cloud, lightning-riven,
Eternity stand at the gate of Heaven,
With his foot set upon the golden stair !





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